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BELLEVILLE LODGE,

A NOVEL,

IN TWO VOLUMES.

Let perjur'd slaves dull verse to flatt'ry fit,
And pow'r reward the prostituted wit;
The gen'rous bosom dares with scorn behold
Corruption's baseness tho' enshrin'd with gold:
Who, steel'd to ill, the cause of right defends,
Is snatch'd at once to gild corruption's ends.

VOL. I.

D U B L I N:

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FOR MESSRS. P. WOGAN, P. BYRNE, J. MOORE,
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1793.



A. M. Harris

BELLEVILLE LODGE.

LETTER I.

Mrs. Grenville to Mrs. Melmouth.

I HAVE sounded Lady Maria, but find her quite averse to my proposals: had she a fortune equal to her merit, believe me, my dear Mrs. Melmouth, she is the last person I would have persuaded. But, alas! what is three thousand pounds for an Earl's daughter?—No hope, no expectations of its being augmented?

Her father possessed the spirit of gambling to such a degree, it took from him every sense of parental duty, and had not an uncle left her this small stipend, she must have been totally destitute of a subsistence. When dying he saw the error of his conduct, and his feelings were too exquisite to describe—How did he wish that he had been deprived of his existence before the last

fatal meeting; he then had twenty thousand pounds left, but now, through his horrid infatuation, he said, to leave so amiable a child to experience the misery of a narrow fortune, it embittered his last hours, and made him suffer mentally more than all the pains disease had inflicted.

I begged him to make himself easy, he might yet recover; but if it should happen otherwise, though I had it not in my power to be of service in the way I most wished, my advice should never be wanting, and my home should be her's as long as she could make it agreeable to herself; but if she did not like immediately to live in town, I knew a genteel family in the country, who would be happy to board her, and I was assured that she would experience more real satisfaction than she ever did, when surrounded with all the pomp and parade of high life.

True, my friend, (with a sigh he returned) it is very possible, for I now see the fallacy of what I have hitherto called enjoyment; but when I think but for me she could have had the liberty of a choice, and that now she has no alternative, the very idea of being obliged to banish herself from all her former acquaintance, will make that life you point



point out more hardly to be relished, and she will feel herself unhappy by being obliged to adopt it.

He had talked so long on this subject that he was quite exhausted, yet desired to see his loved Maria once more—she came—the scene was too melancholy to repeat. Just before he expired, with a voice scarcely intelligible, would you, my daughter, were the only one I have distressed; but, oh! I have many sins to answer for—my dear Maria, forgive and pray for your unhappy father! Those were his last words, and he expired in her arms.

Adieu, the lovely girl I hear is below, I promised to be a parent to her, nor would I forfeit my word for worlds. I will once more hint my wishes, but if I find them still disagreeable I drop the subject for ever.

Your's affectionately,

ELIZA GRENVILLE.

LETTER II.

*Lady Maria Armstrong to Lady Harriet
Bently.*

WHAT will become of the wretched Maria? Oh! my Harriet, I have lost my last relation—my father is no more. Destitute of friends, and almost of fortune, where shall I shelter myself from the sneers of the contemptuous, where fly from the pretended pity of the malicious?—Forgive, and do not hate my memory, my dear Maria, were his last words, words that still vibrate in my ears, and sink deep into my heart.

Yes, my loved father, truly do I forgive all the inconveniences I sustain, all selfish considerations drop, every failing disappears, and only your goodness, your indulgence, finds a place in my memory.

Indeed so trifling did my real situation appear, compared to the loss of a parent, that I had not given it a second thought 'till Mrs. Grenville came and reminded
me

me of it, by persuading me to go with her brother and sister, Sir Thomas and Lady Grenville, to the East-Indies;—though with every flattering prospect, and enforced in the gentlest manner, yet my heart was bursting at the proposal, and it was some time before I could articulate my thanks, and tell her how sensible I was of her goodness.

That it was true, I had now but a small pittance, compared to what I had reason to expect, yet, little as it was, it would keep me from dependence, for I should make it my study to live according to my income; and in regard to fortune, I might be happier than when I thought myself secure of an affluence: but to go so far, for the mere purpose of returning with immense riches, to marry a man, guilty perhaps of every vice, for the sake of money, my heart sickened at the idea; and should I be so fortunate to meet one worthy esteem, could I be happy?—Would not the motive that carried me there always present itself to my imagination? Delicacy and modesty by such a step would be irrecoverably lost, and I should think the circumspection of a whole life would not reinstate me in the good opinion of the world, and what would be to me of still more consequence, the esteem of him, who,

who, if I ever married, would be my utmost wish to cultivate. Though a pleasing form may for a time gloss over every failing, yet, when passion cools, and the impartial eye of reason predominates, how trifling, how despicable must that heart appear to a sensible man, that could sacrifice every consideration for grandeur—I cannot, will not think of it.

My good friend's next proposal was my living in the country, with an acquaintance of her's, who had married a clergyman. The description of the people and place charmed me, I acquiesced with pleasure. My dear Fanny will quit town to reside with me; how much am I obliged to her for this sacrifice, it was what I could not ask, but was truly happy to hear her desire it; for to be deprived of every friend, to see all new faces, would be more I fear than I should be able to support.

I got Mr. Grenville to dispose of my carriages, and dismiss my servants, it was a sad parting. The lease of the house and furniture is also taken off my hands, I have not kept one thing to remind me of my former self, but a casket of jewels, that belonged to my mother, which my father desired me never to part with, even if any unforeseen misfortune

fortune should oblige me to dispose of the contents, the casket still to remain in my possession—what were his reasons I know not, however they shall be complied with.

Before you return from Weymouth I shall be the resident of a village : I have dropped my title, and henceforward address me as Maria Aubrey, they know me for no other where I am going. Let me hear from you often, consider I have no amusements, no acquaintance to call on, and that it is only from letters I can know what is going forward in life. Fanny desires to be remembered.

Your's, &c.

MARIA ARMSTRONG.

LETTER

LETTER III.

Lady Harriet to Lady Maria.

SURELY I dream ! Is it possible you can resolve to live in the country ? Be assured, my dear Maria, from whatever source you fancy there to draw happiness, you will certainly be deceived ; solitude will feed, not remove, melancholy ; such sorrows as your's, believe me, want the soothing voice of friendship, listen to its dictates, listen to its call, from the sister of your heart, your Harriet Bently ;— you are no stranger to the immense fortune I possess, and know also I am my own mistress, come then, share it with me ; or, if you do not chuse to live under the same roof, suffer me to take the next house to mine, which is fortunately vacant, I will immediately settle four hundred a year, to be paid you quarterly, and fix it in such a manner, that if ever my capricious heart should stoop to own a master, it may be out of his power to alter it ; and that the world may never know

know from whence you derive your income, I have a story ready to propagate that will satisfy the most inquisitive—that your grand-father had left you a fortune, placed in the hands of trustees, with a promise never to acquaint you with it 'till your father's death, knowing his unhappy propensity to gaming; they had been true to their trust, and you had now the happiness of finding yourself in an easy independent situation.

Now do you not think this will take? I know it will, and if friendship will not, let charity influence you to accept it; for think, by consenting you may not only insure my present but future felicity; your gravity, your goodness, your just way of thinking, would keep my volatile spirits from becoming riotous, which you know to be too often the case. I would ask your advice, and never do any thing without consulting you.

Do not be proud, or think you will deprive me of any one pleasure by accepting it, for indeed you will not, for though I love cards as I do my life, I allow myself but a certain sum to lose in such a time, and if chance should run very much against me, I never deviate from my plan, but ~~discontinue~~ play

play 'till the time is expired; and as for every other pleasure, I have a superfluity.

Your next I hope will make me the happiest creature breathing, for be assured, there is no satisfaction so great to me as being able to help a friend in distress, and no knowledge equal to that of being assured I have it in my power in some degree to counteract the hand of misfortune. My best wishes attend my dear Fanny, and believe me ever

Your's,

HARRIET BENTLY.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

Lady Maria to Lady Harriet.

I RETURN you a thousand thanks my dear Harriet, for your very generous offer; the knowing I have such a friend, believe me, is an alleviation to my sufferings, but think not ill of me when I refuse your kindness, nor call it pride when I tell you, I cannot stoop to a deception, nor whilst I have something to subsist on, be obliged:—If I had not, to no one person would I submit for pecuniary assistance but yourself; but, thank God, I am not totally destitute; though not enough to keep up appearances in town like my former self, I have sufficient to live genteelly in the country, and surely every day occurrences happen that make me wish myself settled there, for indeed, Harriet, I see already what I am to expect both from pity and contempt, and often do the former wound a feeling mind as much as the latter, according by whom or how spoken.

I will

I will repeat a conversation that passed yesterday, then judge whether I have not cause to wish myself in an asylum that will secure me from such insults.

I went to take leave of Mrs. Douglass, had not long been there before the Duke of Langton and Lord Henry entered, I had not seen the son since he had finished his travels; for when he left England, if you remember, we were at school, consequently were not known to him, though too well to the father. I soon found your cousin took a vacant chair next mine, and I believe very soon took notice of my dejection, for his eyes expressed that genuine pity that ever springs from a generous heart; his words accorded, for in the mildest accents he addressed me, as fearful of intruding, and yet wished conversation might relieve my depression.

He chatted on variety of subjects, which drew me for a time insensibly from myself; and I listened to him with attention.

Whether his father saw his assiduity I know not, or was displeased from some other cause; but he appeared visibly chagrined, and never took his eyes from us till called another way by Lady Alton's entering the room in high spirits, told of her great luck the preceding night.

The

The Duke seemed glad of the opportunity, took up the subject with avidity, looking me full in the face, (you know he always hated my father) said, the love of play generally descended from parents to children—it was hereditary to the mind, as the gout to the body—he would not have a son of his marry into a family that had a propensity to gaming for the universe.

Lady Alton courtesied and thanked him for his compliment, but I too well knew for whom it was designed, and the tears started from my eyes—Lord Henry saw his father directed his discourse to me, and was greatly shocked.

After every thing was said on this topic that malice could suggest, he looked at his watch, mentioned something of an appointment, and desired his son to attend him—he rose, made a submissive bow, a sigh involuntarily issued from his breast, mine echoed, indeed I was more than dejected, for on my return, if tears had not come to my assistance I must have fainted.

As soon as I recovered I ordered the chaise, and whilst it was getting ready sat down to give you this account.—My dear Fanny, as happy as myself to fly a place where mortification and disquietude

quietude reigns, is preparing with the greatest alacrity, to-morrow night we shall be at our peaceful wished for habitation, you shall hear from me soon as I arrive—adieu 'till then, and ever believe me sincerely,

Your affectionate friend,

MARIA ARMSTRONG.

LETTER V.

Lady Harriet to Lady Maria.

MARIA, I am angry with you, with Fanny, the Duke, and the whole world: you for leaving town, Fanny for being accessary, my uncle for his illiberality, and the world for ill-judging. O that I were an Amazon, this moment would I challenge his Grace; but those glorious times are over, when women by force of arms could assert their right; the scene

scene is changed, and the curse of Eve surely falls on this generation, for as my friend Horatio says—Man, the lawless libertine, may rove free and unquestioned; whilst women, helpless women, are scorned, vilified, abused, without getting one male to call another to an account for their ill usage. Whilst their own sex (blush at your partiality) dare not tell another, though guilty, he has uttered a falsehood; nor put aside one from the wall, although the cramp might seize him, without answering it with his blood, honour cannot admit of such gross affronts. Base prostitution of the word! and as base such notions! However, we have this consolation, every female finds, once in her life, a time of revenge; the fly god steps to our assistance, and makes the most haughty own we have the power of subduing.

Henry's father is certainly endowed with second sight, saw this said little urchin aiming at his son's heart, and feared the childrens' love would be more prevailing than the childrens' hatred, and thence arose his ill treatment.

But a truce with this subject for the present. I hurried from Weymouth the instant I received your's, in hopes of meeting you before you left town, I flattered myself could I see you, I should
have

have had sufficient influence to have kept you here, nor do I now despair, when the heat of resentment is a little subsided, you will think very little of retirement, the country will lose its charms, and the dear town rise with all its attractions: for it is morally impossible, my dear Maria, a person so caressed, so praised, (putting my perverse relation out of the question) can like to live in a dreary village. You that have ever conversed with the most polished to be confined to a set of ignoramuses, whose chief conversation consists in how the parson preached, what text he chose, who minded their prayers, how farmer Dobbins's wife was dressed, how many fairs in the year, the state of the moon, and the produce of their fields: and instead of Oratorio and Opera, your ears will be saluted with the cawing of rooks. and with the bleating of lambs. You that have been told twenty times a day, grace was in all your steps, heaven in your eyes, &c. Now as you pass, perhaps a shepherd leaning on his crook may drawl out, I'll be hang'd if that is not a pretty wench: or some rough 'squire, half drunk, hiccup, Egad that's a right lass, and as well made as any hunter I have in the stable. Thus must your feelings be hurt, and you'll die of
the

the vapours in a month I prognosticate.

Henry told me, he saw you at Mrs. Douglas's. I asked what he thought of my friend. He turned to Sir James Millan without answering me one word.

I hate such incommunicative sulky beings, but positively the ladies spoil him, for go where you will no one is talked of but Lord Henry. What a person! says one—What a face! another—What an address! exclaims a third. You would die with laughing were you to see the Misses smirker and draw up their heads when he enters, whilst the poor beaux, conscious of his superiority, hang their's abashed.

I made half a score of them angry the other day, by telling them, they put me in mind of the sensitive plant whenever Hall. approached. I think you two would do mighty well together—

Sure a pair was never seen,
So justly formed to meet by nature—
The youth excelling so in mien,
The maid in every grace and feature.

How I should enjoy his liking you, if it was only for the sake of a little retaliation; let my uncle then talk, we shall conquer. Come then from the country, friendship and revenge call you, it will do, I go by infallible rules.

I'll

I'll give you a curious dialogue I had the other day, on this subject, in my next. Forgive my entertaining you with such trifling matters, but you are sensible nothing better can come from the correspondence of

Your sincerely affectionate,

HARRIET BENTLY.

My dear little Frances, one word with you; let me beg whenever you see Maria the least inclined to melancholy, or feel yourself uncomfortable, let me know it, and I will instantly come and whirl you back to our former scenes of joy and felicity.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

Lady Maria to Lady Harriet.

LAY aside your anger, my dear Harriet, and listen with the ear of friendship; believe me, did you know my feelings, you would not wish me to remain in town, but rather applaud my flight: think not my retiring was the impulse of a moment. No, my plan was fixed long before I met with that mortification; yet, I confess, this would instantly have determined me had I been only wavering; for though I had pictured to myself all the disagreeables that was likely to rise from the proud and ill-natured on my loss of fortune, and thought myself sufficiently armed to bear their insults, nay, that I could pity their insensibility, and depravity of understanding; but when it came to the trial all my philosophy vanished, and I found myself unequal to the task I had with so much success practised in theory.

My

My heart sunk and silently whispered its advice, I listened to its dictates, and hurried from a place I once thought, like you, the centre of every joy; nor did I leave one lingering look behind: the thought of parting from one or two that I knew were real friends, was the only remembrance that gave me pain, for little do you know of our acquaintance, if you think I should be now regarded—their estimation is sunk and obliterated with my fortune.

Lord Henry would not answer when you asked what he thought of me—this evidently shews I am no favorite; but were it otherwise, it would be equally unfortunate for either to have a partiality, in the predicament I now stand with the father: but how I am digressing from the subject.

My spirits were so fluttered that for many miles I felt as if pursued, happy were we when on the second day the village spire appeared in view. Frances, who loves to indulge fancy, compared the tall trees to so many friends, their spreading branches to arms ready to receive us; the birds warbling their sweet notes, to harbingers of peace and joy.

The swiftness of the wheels aroused the faithful dogs, and brought all the rural inhabitants to the doors—the women

men jirked us a courtsey, the men nodded their heads. Artless villagers, (I exclaimed) may you never, like me, experience the taunts of the proud, but like your meandering river, glide smooth and tranquil through the vale of life.

We soon arrived at the parsonage house, the good old couple were at the door—she welcomed us with a kiss, he with a hearty shake of the hand: they expressed great pleasure at seeing any friends of Mrs. Grenville's. I hope, Miss Aubrey, (says the worthy man) you will find in this humble habitation that satisfaction we have experienced for more than thirty years.

Indeed, Sir, (I returned) I do not doubt it, every thing tells me it will be our own faults if we do not, for happiness seems here to have fixed her seat; I already look on you as a father.

He smiled and took each by the hand, led us into a neat parlour, the chimney decorated with flowers gave such a fragrant smell that rivals all our perfumes; she placed a table before us so shining that we could see our faces on it, and then from a large bunch of keys she wore hung to her side, took one and opened a little cupboard, and presently set a bottle of currant wine and a seed cake before us: though unused to tipples
in

in a morning, yet I saw it would be a mortification, to refuse, therefore accepted her kindness.

After we had sat some time, Mrs. Smith asked if it would be agreeable to look at our apartments; we bowed and followed her. These are the rooms, ladies, I appropriated for you, but I have still a spare bed-chamber, which if you like better, you are at liberty to chuse. You'll excuse me, I must go down to see if the dinner is ready, we dine at two, I hope you will not think this hour too late, but Mr. Smith is fond of long mornings. We told her, any hour that suited her would us, then with a gracious nod she made her exit.

After she was gone Fanny smiled—What would Lady Harriet think of these late hours? She would be apt to tell our good hostess, that she certainly meant breakfast, for, as to dinner, it must be impossible.

We now congratulated ourselves with tears of joy; for my part, my heart seemed eased of a heavy load; I looked back to what I had been with all the indifference of a Stoic. Fanny compared us to mariners that had been long buffeted by tempestuous winds, unexpectedly thrown on an hospitable shore.

We

We are called to dinner, let me hear from you soon, and do not forget the promised dialogue; I, in return, will give you a description of our rural retreat. Omit not any thing that happens to you, for the most minute, the most trivial occurrences where you are concerned will be interesting to

Your sincere friends,

MARIA AND FRANCES.

LETTER VII.

Lord Henry Bently to George Ashley, Esq.

How changed is thy friend since yesterday! My future happiness or misery from one fatal moment is become dependant. Happiness! did I say? George. No, that, like an airy phantom eludes my grasp, whilst fears, doubts, and perplexities, have taken its place in my heart, and from henceforward I foresee we shall become inseparable. Read the transactions of yesterday, and judge whether I have not cause to fear the future.

I went

I went with my father to call on Mrs. Douglas, whom I had not seen since my arrival; after our congratulations were over, my eyes were attracted by the loveliest woman I ever saw. Such a figure, such a face, and such a complexion, contrasted by the finest dark hair—her eyes, the same colour, were expressive of every innate charm; mildness, gentleness, sensibility, tinged with a melancholy, that, to me, made her the more pleasing. Sure she was formed in heaven's sweetest mould, for all that is spoke of divinity, every grace, every perfection, is in her combined.

Think not this only a lover's rant, believe me it is not, for she is universally admired, the men all declare themselves charmed with her, but not one has had the disinterestedness since her loss of fortune, to try to engage her heart! The love of money, otherwise dissipation, gets the better of every other consideration, and deadens the finer feelings of the heart! The charming Maria has now lost her influence! Mercenary wretches! I thank you, for it is only from your caprice, your love of riches, that I could have the vanity to hope. Hope, why did I mention thee? Take the

the conversation that passed, and tell me whether I ought to listen to its soothing voice.

Cards happened to be started by one of the company, the Duke immediately took up the subject, said, a professed gamester was of all characters the most despicable, (looking Lady Maria Armstrong full in the face, for I found this charming woman was the daughter of him, whom of all men he disliked;—surely there must be something more than cards to cause such a rooted inveteracy) they brought their children to beggary, and would be guilty of any vice to gratify this their darling passion: It was hereditary, and a son of his should as soon marry into a mad family as one fond of play.

I saw her wipe the falling tear, and I that moment would have given worlds to have fallen at her feet, to beg pardon for my father's rashness; I addressed my discourse, and tried every method to let her see the Duke's sentiments and mine did not at all coincide, regarding herself. He saw my attention, and hurried me away abruptly.

On our return he asked me in a careless manner, what I thought of Armstrong's daughter: What every one, my Lord, must think, that sees her, that she

is the model of all perfection. He took no notice of my praises, but continued, she is going to the Indies with Sir Harry and Lady Grenville, her father having dissipated his whole fortune, it is the only chance she can have of settling well in life.

I sat like one stupified, for this intelligence took from me the power of reply. He saw my chagrin and proposed the play, I readily acquiesced, for any thing was better than conversation.

The first act was over when we came, and the house so crowded that we were obliged to separate. I went to a box where sat two elderly ladies, so much engrossed by conversation that they did not mind my placing myself immediately behind them, and so much was I absorbed in thought, that had not the name of Maria Armstrong reached my ears, they might have talked to eternity and I not known one sentence, but that at once aroused me from my reverie and I was all attention.

Indeed, (says one of them) the lovely girl gave me such good reasons for not accepting of Sir Harry's offer of going to the East, that I could no longer enforce it.

And how has she disposed of herself?

I have

I have taken lodgings for her in the country, where she is gone, accompanied by the daughter of a clergyman, they have never been separated since they left school, their histories as well as their dispositions are similar, for though both young, they have drank deep of affliction's bitter cup: she begged that she might be permitted to go with her, I had not the least objection, and Maria was happy to have the friend of her heart with her: Their little fortunes will enable them to pay genteelly for their board, and a sufficiency to supply every want they can experience in the country; but the place where they are retired by their own desire is to be secret.

This account dispelled in a moment the gloom the former had imprinted, and though I was well assured I could never get my father's consent, yet the degree of ease I then felt, seemed, for the present, to calm every painful idea.

The country rose to my imagination with all its attractions, and immediately I resolved to frame some excuse to leave town, not thinking that I knew not in what part of the world to find her. But go I must, I cannot stay here. Write me your sentiments, tell me how I

ought to act, for never was the advice of a friend more wanted than at present, by

Your affectionate,

HENRY BENTLY.

LETTER VIII.

Lady Harriet to Lady Maria.

PREVIOUS to every other matter I give you the conversation you desire, for fear another subject may put it out of my head.

Know then, my friend, one night—(strange to tell!) I lay awake almost half an hour, when this thought entered my head, how it was possible for Henry to be so much in my company without being captivated, the conclusion as naturally followed, that his heart must be made of adamant, or that my swains must

must have swerved a little from truth, for a thousand times a day they declare me to be irresistible.

I arose, and thus entered into a consultation with myself: Suppose coz. made me an offer of his heart, should I accept or should I refuse? Grave sentimental—neither cards, flirtations, or late hours. No, it will not suit, it cannot, it shall not.

In the midst of those cogitations, in came the old oracle, the Countess Dowager of Arden. Is it possible (she exclaimed) Lady Harriet alone, and laughing so loud by herself; you must have had very agreeable thoughts to cause such mirth, and detain you so long from company.

The thoughts may be so, Lady Arden, but I much doubt were they realized if they would.

I should think (she returned) what gives the mind pleasure to contemplate, would the heart to experience.

I declare that word puts me in mind of your being experienced in the very thing I was debating, and as I want advice, I will recount it.

I then repeated what I have wrote. She discussed the subject in a masterly manner, and then took her leave, and
I went.

I went piping hot to teaze the Duke, found him and his son *teté a teté* as usual.

Well, Madam, what brought you so early this morning?

I have had odd thoughts, my Lord Duke.

I think they are seldom otherwise, (says Henry) about odd people.

What you call oddities are generally the best sort of your acquaintance. I was in hopes you would have said otherwise, for then I could have told you with a better grace, they were employed in this present company.

Pray let us hear on what occasion?

O, with all my heart. I was supposing, if Hal. should take a fancy to my lovely person, (which by the bye I wonder he has not) how your Grace would like me for a daughter, and whether I should say yes or no. I was laughing very loud when I pictured to myself how you would stare with astonishment at such a proposal, when at that instant came Lady Arden, she of course asked the cause of my mirth.

I never make secrets, or keep them, you know, Henry, (he bowed feebly) therefore told her all except names, those I suppressed for my own sake, she
instantly

instantly communicated an infallible rule to be ascertained, whether the parties liked each other, and matrimony ensue. Pray proceed, I am all attention. Then thus spoke the Countess.

How does this said gentleman behave to you?

Often will not speak.

If you interrogate him?

A monosyllable is all the return.

This looks like love, for when the heart is not concerned it will attend to trifles, and words will flow spontaneous; on the contrary, where there is a penchant, it is generally attended with timidity, which bars the power of speech. (That is not the case with coz. thought I.)

You sometimes think with judgment; (says my good uncle.) I pretended I did not hear him and proceeded.

Yet all this signifies nothing if you do not resemble each other; for, take my word, no resemblance no matrimony. So now, Henry, give me your hand, let us examine our features. I led him to the glass—You see I have a genteel Grecian nose, you an old fashion Aquiline—I have dimples all over my face, you not one—my eyes are blue, penetrating, divine; your's black, and

expressive of nothing but mildness—so spare yourself the trouble of asking me, for I see it will not do—I never run counter to fate, of course you will never have the honor of my hand.

I am very glad to hear it is ordained so, I believe, were it otherwise, I should desire my son for once to oppose the destinies.

What say you, Hal.?

I always make it a rule to submit to the higher powers.

When your own inclination coincides, provoking mortal, (I returned) I should leave you a little out of conceit with myself, did not my own opinion and my lovers keep up my spirits.

This I tell you, Harriet, would you lay aside a little of that vanity, the love of cards, keep more at home, and not dress so fantastical, and—

Good, your Grace, add no more to the catalogue, I beseech you, and I will promise you one day or other to try to conform to all those frightful precepts; when I arrive at the sober years of thirty, I will think a little about it, but 'till then you must excuse me, for at present I have so strong a propensity to act contrary, that I should find it too much for my weak spirits to resist. But
to

to shew you I am not angry, I should be happy you would accompany me to Lady Betty Askew's rout this evening. He frowned at me. Now indeed, uncle, I will look you out the finest set of old Dowagers in the kingdom; and more, though I love cards as I do my reputation, I will sit by you the whole time, and when I see Mrs. West colour and look spiteful, I will take out my glass and shew her her face. It will certainly be charity to go, for it may prevent her making any grimaces in future, and I shall then have no motive to laugh; for 'tis from those queer mortals I have the character of volatility stamped, because I cannot help it, though at the very crisis of the game, when I see their distorted countenances.

Harry, you shall go with me to the auction, there are some curious antiques to be disposed of, and all the world is to be there. I took him by the arm, and drew the heir apparent from the parental side, much against papa's inclinations I perceived, but I was resolved to tease him, for his ungenerous behaviour to you.

The length of this is enormous, not a word more will I add, but that I am now and ever your's,

HARRIET BENTLY.

Aunt Gertrude desires her best remembrance to you and Frances. I expect every letter the welcome summons to attend you to town, I need not tell you with what happiness I shall obey.

LETTER IX.

Lady Maria to Lady Harriet.

MAKE no apology for long letters, your's are too agreeable to admit it, they entertain us all: I read your dialogue to the good Rector and his wife, (suppressing titles) and made them laugh exceedingly.

Frances is mightily pleased with the Countess's infallible rule, declares, hencefor-

henceforward, she shall look for a resemblance.

We are much obliged for repeating the offer of conveying us to town, but I assure you we have not a wish beyond our present state, so far from it, that we felicitate one another on our situation, for I can very justly say, 'till now I have been an utter stranger to real satisfaction. You, my dear Harriet, was unacquainted with my sorrows, it was my father caused them, and I wished to screen his faults, even from a friend, and my feelings, the consequence of them.

If you had but seen him on his return from the gaming table, you would, like me, have shuddered at the present moment, and dreaded for the future. Suicide with all its horrors presented itself continually to my imagination; his disturbed countenance, his inattention to me, to every thing, his sighs, and latterly, a settled melancholy, all seemed to point out a fatal period.

The numerous attendants that surrounded me alike gave pain, for I presented to my thoughts the time, when I should not have one left. Often have I gone to bed without closing my eyes. Sleep ever flies the miserable; every little noise made me start, and I listened
for

for a repetition with an anguish not to be described.

You often lamented my ill health, but, alas! the body suffered only as it was influenced by the mind—thus was I the envy of many, and by all thought possessed of every earthly bliss, more wretched than the common labourer, more to be pitied than the beggar at my gate.

How far different, since I have had the leisure to contemplate the vicissitudes of life! Each day convinces me, it is not in riotous mirth, nor in a bustling world, we can hope for happiness, that real bliss is only found in social retirement. The innocent inhabitants of this calm retreat soothe my soul, and harmonize my mind; the mist of dissipation is taken from my eyes, and the sunshine of content illumines my heart: Indeed such a metamorphose has taken place, that I can hardly persuade myself but I have experienced the transmigration of souls, and fled from the body of a fine lady to that of a country girl.

My ideas are also changed—everything has such a different appearance: the adulation I once thought, and you point out, as so bewitching, now wears the shape of deceit: a splendid ball-room only a receptacle for envy and jealousy;

jealousy ; routs and masquerades, one an antidote to health, the other a meer puppet show ; and dress, as so much waste of time. Could I have foreseen what I looked forward to with such horror, was the only event that could have drove me to this asylum, how many heart aches would it have spared me, and I should have crushed every thought that dared to complain at the dispensations of Providence : But we are frail mortals, Harriet, and a weight of cares will make the most stoical of us murmur ; our understanding leads only to the present moment, nor will it suffer us to think that our greatest felicity often springs from our greatest misery—or, with Pope, that whatever is, is right.

Would you attend to description, I would give you one, that in spite of all your prejudices must make you own that there is something desirable in a village.

First then, we have a very good house ; two parlours, where woodbine and jessamin entwine round the lower windows, gives it a cool pleasant appearance ; the upper, grapes, cherries, and plumbs hang in such luxuriance, we never want a desert on the table : the prospect from my room is an extensive lawn, the other presents an excessive fine garden, and from

from the dressing room, or rather working one, (as the former we have no need of, dressing twice a day being quite out of the question) a large cap takes off the trouble of frizing, and, I think, more becoming plain country Misses: From this window we see a long avenue of trees, terminated by a turnpike road, where, in perspective, are a number of carriages hourly passing and repassing, our garden wall reaches to the end; at the extremity is a summer-house, which we are at present very busy in decorating, and, when the weather will permit, we carry our guitars and sing and play alternately, sometimes our work, and Mr. Smith reads, and sometimes drinks tea, en famille. A high hill rises on the left, with a hanging wood and a serpentine walk carries you almost imperceptibly to the top, where my good Mrs. Smith tells me, is the most delightful view in the world; six or seven villages are from thence seen, and a number of gentlemen's seats interspersed; the other side are corn fields and downs, behind the house is a rookery, at the bottom of the garden is a fine cascade, and, on opening a door, a large river well stocked with fish.

I have not yet attempted climbing the hill, it has at present too formidable a look

look to one unused to walk, but I traverse the garden most days, and find my strength and health already so much mended, that I shall not fear soon of mounting the top, as well as any rural she in the village.

How happy should I be to see you here, could I get you once to divest yourself of the fine lady, and conform to the dress and conversation of the rustics, as you call them, you would soon be convinced I have not exaggerated, and that happiness is found in humble life, in cottages as well as palaces.

Adieu, my Harriet, believe me, wherever I am, whatever changes I experience, I shall ever remain,

Your unalterable,

MARIA ARMSTRONG.

LETTER

LETTER X.

Lady Harriet to Lady Maria.

WELL, every one in his humour! I am no reasoner, therefore cannot hope to persuade by dint of eloquence; old time I look up to as a friend, that ere many months are elapsed will bring you to my side the question: But though, my dear Maria, I cannot boast of an over wise head, yet I believe my heart is not deficient.

Your afflictions I thank God are past, the reading of them made me miserable, the sympathetic tear started from my eyes—Could Maria suffer all this (I exclaimed) and conceal it? If she had made her sorrows known, I might have found some method to have mitigated them—even by recounting them to a friend their weight is lessened: and why did you not check my unruly spirits when your's were so depressed? for, far be it from me to insult the distressed, and I must think of it in that light when melancholy reigns in the heart,

heart, instead of alleviating to treat it with levity and riotous mirth ; the mind suffers doubly by comparison——however, it has taught me a lesson, henceforward to study the countenance, and conform my conversation to what I see imprinted there.

Though against myself, I am pleased to hear you are satisfied with your present situation, I confess the description reads well, but excuse me when I tell you, it brought to my remembrance what I experienced some little time since.

I had a landscape presented me drawn from nature, so strikingly beautiful that I was quite fascinated with it ; I had looked at it so long that I fancied myself under a fine spreading oak, viewing with delight all the variegated scenes around me, then listening to a cascade, that fell with many a bound over a high jutting rock, or leaning on a stile, admiring the sheep, the faithful dog, and shepherds cots, that were there interspersed : In short, I was so taken with it, that I ordered my carriage, resolved though at the distance of twenty miles to go to see this fairy land, but behold when I came, I found more than half its beauties indebted to the painter's glowing colours ; contrasted light and shade,

shade, arranging the objects within a narrow compass, finished by an enlivening sun: for very different did the reality appear—the sun had withheld its beams, and a heavy rain gave it such a dreary uncomfortable look, that I returned home mortified and disappointed.

So, Maria, will it fare with you, be assured, when winter comes, fullen and sad, with all its rising train of vapours, storms, and tempests, the bleak North winds whistling through the trees, and the shepherds drenched in rain; the timid flocks flying for shelter to the leafless hedges: when this scene presents itself all your present prospects will vanish, and you will find a fire-side but a poor substitute for the all cheering sun.

But where am I running, to what lengths will my ungovernable pen draw me? I sat down with an intent to have recounted my yesterday's adventure, but this rural matter has set it quite aside.

But is it not your desire I should make you acquainted with every transaction? How then can I close this letter, with a good grace, without attending to it? I cannot. Prepare then for the recital of a very long story.

I went,

I went, according to custom, (having half an hour to spare) to teaze the Duke; when I came in, his Grace was sitting on a sofa with a face as long as my arm; Henry in a chair opposite, looking like the knight with the sorrowful countenance. I had bounced the door open as usual, but observing their attitudes, willing to conform to the times, I altered my pace, walking very majestically step by step to the side of the Duke, placed myself in the same solemn manner with as little noise as possible, then took out my pocket glass and made an hundred grimaces without uttering one word; after some minutes his Grace broke silence.

What are you at, Harriet; Adonis like, contemplating your person?

Yes, my Lord, for here I always find new subject for admiration; but if I was as ugly as the old gentleman, I should rather look at myself than the present company, for one fills me with horror, and the other makes me sigh, which by the bye I am so little used to, that I am afraid it will terminate in a scream. I then gave such a violent one as made them both start, and the servants came running in to know what was the matter.

I beg your pardon, says the old trot of a steward, (looking at me significantly)

cantly) we did not know Lady Harriet was here, but thought you had been alone and suddenly taken ill; then made a low bow and retired.

I sung a few lines extemporary, about mistaking the voice of a nightingale for the croaking of a raven. I saw, with all his gravity, he could scarce refrain laughing.

You find, Lady Harriet, my fervants were not at all surprised when they saw you here; you are always so riotous that a noise is nothing new from you.

I laid aside my glafs, put my hands before me—May I be so bold, Sir? then gave two or three hems. Now you have again vouchsafed to open your lips, your Grace will add to the mighty obligation, first to lay aside those terrific looks, and then to inform me what occasioned them: As to coz. he is metamorphosed into a statue, therefore cannot pretend to draw any thing from an insensible. So, please your Grace, it rests with you; curiosity for once will make me struggle to be attentive, and to spare you all the trouble I can, I will begin for you.

Your son and you have had an altercation?

We certainly have.

About matrimony?

Even

Even so.

Now, Sir, proceed.

Will you promise to give your real sentiments, Harriet?

So help me God, laying my hand on my heart.

But the letter is already too long to proceed farther, I will defer the conclusion to my next. Do not be impatient, it is not so very interesting, I will not wait your answer, but write as soon as I can; I have had half a hundred messages already, my poor aunt is just attacked with a fit of the gout, I must first go and see the dear good old woman before I attend to any one else.

Your's, &c.

HARRIET BENTLY.

LETTER

LETTER XI.

Lady Harriet to Lady Maria.

NEVER more will I complain of not having the gift of persuasion, no, never; for though my ill stars ordained that I could not prevail on you, yet, let me tell you, other people confess my power: for my own part, I think myself a relation of Solomon's. I will immediately go to aunt Gertrude, she will help me to trace my pedigree, and I know the result will be, that I am lineally descended from that wise mortal, for he never made a wiser decision when he ordered the children to be divided, than your friend did betwixt her two relations.

I left off my last letter, where my uncle was beginning his speech, of you know, Harriet, I have but one child, of course you must think it my first wish to see him well married.

Truly pious wish, and a very natural one, (I returned, lifting up my eyes)
and

and you have looked him out an help-mate I suppose?

I have, one that has riches to satisfy the most covetous, and accomplishments to please the most scrutinizing.

Her name, uncle?

Lady Grace.

I gave another enormous shriek.

What is the matter, Harriet?

Nothing, my Lord, pray proceed, I am apt to have hysterics at any great surprise. Coz. smiled for the first time, the Duke proceeded.

Harry has been so wanting in filial respect, that he has absolutely rejected my choice; such an indulgent father as he has always found me, to refuse the only favor I ever asked, is ungrateful to a degree, I am certain nothing but a prepossession could induce him to cross me in my fondest hopes, and it must be such an one he is ashamed to own, otherwise he would have confessed it, and asked my approbation.

What say you, Henry; I ask, guilty or not guilty?

My dear Harriet, (he returned) I have only to declare that Lady Grace is a woman I always disliked, therefore if speaking my thoughts in regard to her be imputed a crime, behold me guilty—guilty of every thing my father has alledged,

alleged, except ingratitude and filial love, in both those my heart acquits me.

Well then, look on me as arbitrator. I have heard, gentlemen, without you put yourself in the person's place you cannot be a competent judge. Behold me then, a father sixty-one years of age, with a son about twenty-two, the darling of my heart, the comfort of my declining years, a fine personable youth, so like his mother—ah! while she lived we fostered him betwixt us, but cruel fate soon deprived him of this tender parent, and me the best of wives. Never shall I forget, when death had almost sealed her fine expressive eyes, in faltering accents she begged me to be kind to her son—Let him never want, my dear Lord, the supplicating voice of a mother to entreat for him.

The Duke could no longer bear it, for, between you and me, those words were spoke by his Duchefs, though he did not know I was acquainted with it. I put my hand before his mouth just as he was going to speak—have patience, your Grace, I always trace things from the first cause.

I promised her to supply the place of both parents, and for her sake he should never petition in vain. Many years had elapsed, not a frown from
my

my son, nor a dictating word from me, 'till matrimony was thought on; a matter of such concern I was certain could only be decided by a parent.

Riches I knew brought every comfort, attendants, pomp, state, homage, jewels, equipage; all, all are there centered, so that you may be sure I looked for this, and found one that answered exactly, her I commanded him to look on as his destined wife, for, as to love, it is out of the question, romantic, boyish, only to be found in novels; formerly such a passion was heard of, but the present times wisely ridicule it, the heart has shook off such shackles, and riches and liberty are happy substitutes, In short, he peremptorily refused.

Now I am the son, shall I be the obedient or the disobedient one? The former certainly—be it so then.

Whenever I indulged a thought towards matrimony I always pictured it a state of harmony, loving and beloved, wife, friend, companion, centered in one; but the happiness I enjoyed with the best of fathers made me not anxious to seek for such an one as my imagination had formed, but how were all my flattering hopes crushed when he declared the person he would have me wed? My heart rebelled, but yet I con-

D

quered

quered my inclinations, and married, to please a parent, the woman I most disliked; the consequence was home became insupportable, I fled from her to the gaming table, any where sooner than pass my time with a person that had no one thing to recommend her but riches—wealth I did not want, for I had more than enough to partake of every rational enjoyment.

She followed my example, extravagance and dissipation now reigns, the house is continually a scene of riot and confusion. Thus, step by step we go on 'till a divorce ensues; the news papers are filled with our exploits, the heart of sensibility is wounded beyond a possibility of recovery, and a pistol puts an end to my existence, my father, when too late, discovers riches and happiness are not always compatible.—Here I stopped.

Well, Madam, (says the Duke) what inference do you draw from thus stating the cause as you call it?

That you have both been to blame; you for commanding without consulting his heart, and he for not softening his refusal for your decision. That you my Lord Duke promise never to force your son's inclinations, and he not to marry without your approbation—settle
this

this and I will leave you with pleasure. I took each by the hand and put them together, you are now friends, good people, say but the word and I shall be happy.

Harriet, you have conquered, I agree to your terms.

And I also, (says Henry) and now, coz. stay and dine with us, and in the evening I will attend you to the Pantheon. I agreed. Thus ended this mighty affair, and so ends my letter.

Your's, &c.

H. BENTLY.

LETTER XII.

Lady Maria to Lady Harriet.

DEAR HARRIET.

SINCE my last we have been quite ramblers, several times visited our little village, which I am sorry to say wore the marks of the greatest poverty. Only ten poor thatched cottages besides the farmer's house, those so very wretched you would hardly think human beings could exist in them; the windows I suppose were formerly glazed, but now they are more than half stuffed with rags and paper to keep out the cold, which gives such a gloomy appearance when you enter, that I do not wonder it should affect the inhabitants within, indeed you scarce meet with a cheerful countenance: the taxes are so high and numerous, they tell us, and provisions so dear, that Barley bread is now their only diet! Indeed the children look starved and the parents emaciated.

Blush,

Blush, ye neighbouring rich, at your inhumanity, you that are studying to dissipate that store heaven has so bountifully bestowed on you, to let your poor starve, die, without offering one single guinea to relieve them.

Fanny and I went home full of the misery we had seen, counted our little store, found we were very rich; for, do you know, at the year's end, we shall have ninety pounds to spare?

Fortunately my dear friend received her whole hundred yesterday, she immediately ordered ten stuff gowns for the oldest women, and I as many coats for their husbands, both were almost naked: I gave also to every cot a new window, and the next quarter they shall have doors, that they may taste some degree of comfort, and be guarded against the approaching winter.

They are already so proud with this one improvement, and such an emulation reigns amongst them, which shall have the cleanest house when we call on them, that they appear a new set of beings—they say, that before they had no heart to do any thing, their whole care was to keep out the cold, but now they had such fine lights they strove to make it look all of a piece.

We

We have bought worsted for the children to knit, and the women when not employed in the field; they are all now as busy making stockings as you can imagine, when they have finished a certain quantity they sell them at the market town, and we divide the money amongst the community; we treat each family of a Sunday with a loaf and two large lumps of beef divided amongst the whole, and yet we have to spare.

It would delight you to see their gratitude.—The children, if we walk the fields, will be running from every quarter, with their hands full of flowers, to give their good ladies, as they call us: Some gather blackberries and place themselves before us, squat us a courtesy, and present their little store.

The men, if they see us walk out late in an evening, follow us at a distance, for fear we should meet with any thing to hurt, that they might be ready to defend us; they call us their guardian angels, and beg we will never leave them.

They made us laugh the other day exceedingly. Nine or ten followed us some time, at last one got resolution to come near, he scraped his foot, took off his hat, scratched his head, begged pardon for their boldness, but they had a great
favour

favour to ask. We desired they would not hesitate speaking it, for if it was in our power we certainly would grant it. They then desired to know, when either of our birth days happened. Fanny said her's was the day following, they bowed to the ground, were much obliged to us.

We wondered what could be their reason, but were not at a loss the next day, for the morning was ushered in by ringing of bells, and the children had collected turf and wood, and bonfires blazed at every door. Such are the hearts of these grateful people.

Our good Rector says, he can now look with pleasure on his congregation, his flock being not only enlarged, but they are all clean and look happy.— Confess, my dear Harriet, that there is more real felicity in seeing so many beings made happy, than can ever be experienced in all the amusements the town could offer; this I am assured, we both taste that delightful satisfaction as is impossible to describe, nor, without being felt, can never be known.

I have at last mounted the hill—there are a number of gentlemen's seats to be seen from thence, but here they are not inhabited but just in the hunting season, that being come, I suppose
chance

chance will present us with a fight of some of them, but I can have no opinion of men possessed of such large estates that mind but themselves, when every village swarms with objects of charity.

I wish you had a mansion near, I know your heart so well, you need not see distress a second time to remind you what ought to be done.

Fanny joins me in every kind remembrance to yourself and Lady Gertrude—believe me ever,

Your's, &c.

MARIA ARMSTRONG.

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

Mrs. Grenville to Mrs. Annesley.

I AM obliged to you, my dear Mrs. Annesley, for interesting yourself in Lady Maria's and Miss Aubrey's happiness; it is with pleasure I can assure you, both my young friends are extremely satisfied with their situation; a worthy clergyman and his wife, by my request, have made them a part of their family, the name of the place is at present a secret, Frances's history is known but to few, but, as you wish to hear it, I will try to satisfy your curiosity.

Her grandfather was the youngest son of Lord Aubrey, and possessed one of the best Bishopricks in Ireland, he had a large family; unfortunately her father never was a favorite, though justly deserving the greatest affection: He very early in life saw the partiality to his brother, and his dislike to him, which affected his young spirits, and gave him a solidity beyond his years; his inclina-

tion led him to the church, which was the only desire the bishop thought fit to comply with, and that for obvious reasons, for as soon as he had taken priests orders, he exchanged a living in his gift near him, for one not half the value, in a retired village, in Yorkshire, on purpose to banish him from all his connections in Ireland, and at the same time give him to understand, it was all he had to expect, though far from what he had a right to claim.

He received it without murmuring, for solitude suited his turn of mind, every local attachment seemed eradicated by cold usage, and he fancied he could leave Dublin without regret—But when he came to the first rising ground, a natural impulse caused him to turn his head, he looked on his father's palace—a sigh burst from his heart, and the ready tear found its way on his cheek.

The fires were just kindled in the city, the smoke was hovering on the tops of the chimnies, he sat looking at it absorbed in thought, when a brisk wind suddenly arose and dispersed it. How emblematical of myself (he said) my heart still hovers o'er its native spot, 'till, like the vanished smoke, compelled to flight, I go, without perhaps leaving
a trace

a trace in my father's memory—may his remaining sons ever shew him that warm affection I this moment feel.

He spoke no more, but pursued his journey; the length of the way and the variety of scenes recalled him to himself, his spirits grew each day better, and he arrived and took possession of his future residence with unfeigned pleasure.

He lived more than twenty years without any particular occurrence happening, almost adored by his parishioners, for as he had no family, he gave what he had to spare amongst them; he never had left them a whole day, nor ever rode twelve miles beyond his own precincts. He wrote home once a year for the first three, but did not obtain an answer, therefore dropped it, nor did he ever know what became of any of his relations.

When he had entered his fifty-first year, a family, consisting of an old gentleman, his wife, and daughter, took a house in his village, drove by misfortunes from their former residence, to seek an asylum in a cheaper part of the world: from an opulent merchant he was reduced to a state, comparatively speaking, little better than want, for,
after

after all their debts were paid, they had no more than one hundred a year left.

The daughter had passed the middle age of life, was a most accomplished woman, and bore her misfortunes with philosophical resignation.

The good rector rejoiced at this acquisition to his flock, and visited them as soon as they were settled; for tho' he had been in a manner driven from society, he had a mind turned for social life, and a friend or two was what he always wished, but they were not to be found amongst the noisy set of fox-hunters, and his other neighbours, tho' he made it a point to visit, yet their education was not such to fit them for companions.

The merchant received him with the politeness of one that had seen the world, and soon discovered the great worth of his visitor; though so many years a recluse his mind was not enervated, nor his manner rusticated, he still retained, and happily blended, the easy manner and address of the man of fashion, with the learning and solidity of the priest—such an intimacy ensued, that they were never happy apart.

His heart 'till then a stranger to love now told him Eliza had conquered. It is needless to repeat courtships, they were

were married, and never two beings enjoyed more perfect felicity. They lived together fifteen years, a twin son and daughter were their only children, Fanny and Charles; she at a proper age was sent to school, and there became the intimate friend of Lady Harriet and Maria: the brother was well educated by his father, and was well recommended by his grandfather to the Indies, the only account they ever heard of him was, that the ship was wrecked and every one had perished.

Frances felt for his loss more than I can describe; the grandfather doated on the boy, and his mother did not long survive the news; this was almost too much for her gentle spirits, and she has often declared, had it not been for her two friends she could not have supported this treble loss.

Time had almost alleviated her sorrows when an express came to hasten her from school; her father had expired in a fit of apoplexy, and what augmented her grief, the person who succeeded was a man dead to every feeling of humanity, hurried poor Fanny from a home endeared to her by living with the best of parents. The beneficence of his disposition had left her not
more

more than two hundred pounds after the expences of his interment were paid.

She went immediately to the house of her grandmother, who was still living but grown quite childish, yet she consoled herself she had still a parent left : But this was a consolation but of short continuance, for death, in less than half a year, deprived her of this last relation. She, as the only heir, possesses their small annuity, and is all she had excepting the house and furniture, which he immediately sold and purchased another nearer town, where she placed her father's old servant, that she might still have a home to go to ; she allowed her twenty pounds a year : for as soon as she became friendless, Lady Maria wrote and insisted on her living with her, she acquiesced with pleasure ; but since Maria's affairs have been so deranged, and both are obliged to pay for their board, Lady Harriet has insisted on paying the annuity to old Sarah ; Frances goes once a twelvemonth to see her, where she always finds a neat room to receive her.

They pay forty pounds per Annum for their board, their other expences amount to about twenty more ; Maria has an overplus of ninety, and Fanny forty, they do a vast deal of good, the whole

whole village resounds with their praises; my friend thanks me every time I hear from him, for sending them such an agreeable acquisition to their family; the old lady says, they have renewed her years, and I am equally happy to hear the young folks can find in a village more real pleasure than they ever experienced in high life. Adieu, believe me ever

Your's,

CHARLOTTE GRENVILLE.

LETTER XIV.

Lord Henry to George Ashley, Esq.

THE lively Harriet unknowingly has undone me; she has extorted such a promise—yes, George, the fatal word is given, and I cannot marry without my father's consent; it is now next to an impossibility

impossibility I shall ever wed the woman I adore, the Duke's unhappy prejudice to her family, strengthened by his love of money, will ever be a negative to my happiness, yet this was the only alternative, if I had not acquiesced I should absolutely have married Lady Grace; for though misery must inevitably have ensued, I foresaw I could not long hold my resolution against the persuasions of a father, his being so peremptory provoked me to a refusal, but had he become a petitioner, self interest would have sunk, I should have yielded, and been the unhappiest of mortals.

Harriet I know thinks she has done me an essential service; in some measure she did, by ending the dispute.—She came in the midst of our altercation, and in her gay manner offered to be the arbitrator, and in the midst of an hundred heart aches I could not forbear smiling to hear her harangue.

The cunning gypsey first gave into his humour, and by mentioning one particular circumstance, softened his heart, and before she left him made him promise never to force my inclinations, provided I agreed not to marry without his approbation—so she took us both in.

She

She really can manage my father better than any one, she don't mind his anger, for if he frowns, she laughs; if he scolds her she sings; and when in a violent passion, she will place herself before him, make a thousand grimaces, 'till she forces him to laugh, then throws her arms about his neck, calls him her own dear uncle, shakes hands, and he is as placid as if nothing had happened.

I know you will say, run restive Hal. marry the woman you like, you have no relation but Harriet, and I know her disposition so well, that were your father to disinherit you in favour of her, she would tear such a will in a hundred pieces. I know it, Ashley, I am not afraid of his carrying it so far, act how I will; nor would he now, I am persuaded, have attempted forcing my inclinations if he had not feared my partiality for Lady Maria.

I know you think Harriet is my only relation, but do not be surprised when I tell you, I have one equally as near; one day or other I will give you his history, at present where he is or whether he exists I know not, his grandmother and my father were brother and sister; she married General Grandison, and had only one child, the mother of
this

this said cousin; the General left all those large estates we have the care of in the West of England, in trust with the Duke for him, if ever found, if not, I am the heir which I assure you I have not a wish to be, but from my heart hope the real owner may come and take possession; his Grace has been a very faithful steward, for as he receives the rents he buys into the stocks, or purchases estates as he thinks will be most advantageous, that it is amazing how it is accumulated—he must be near my age, my father has given the management to me, I believe he has observed a depression on my spirits, and thinks it occasioned by his late harshness, therefore hopes this employ will drive every disagreeable recollection from my thoughts.

I shall go next week to the mansion-house, but do not mean to reside in it, for our friend Beauchamp lives within a mile of Belleville Lodge, I can walk from thence as often as I like; O that fortune would guide my steps towards the lovely Maria, but what would it avail without the fickle goddess would adopt her, she will never be adopted by his Grace, and there are no miracles in our days to bring such things about.

I must

I must wait with patience, and leave to destiny the care of hereafter.

Harriet asked me the other day how I liked her friend, I pretended I did not hear, for I really was afraid to answer; she has such penetrating eyes and quick discernment that she would instantly discover my partiality, which for many reasons I would not have her suspect; I am certain she could not help telling it, and the time is not arrived I wish the Duke to know the sentiments of

Your sincere friend

HENRY BENTLY.

LETTER XV.

Lady Harriet to Lady Maria.

HARRIET, Princess of Abelculmela, to Maria and Frances, Queens of the enchanted village, sendeth greeting, a
fine

fine milch cow, laden with the produce of her dominions, as a token of her great love and high opinion of their government, she begs in return their code of laws, that she may regulate her's by them in future.

Without joking I beg you to accept this my running footman, my letters are fastened to its horns, in those I have fully explained what office she is to hold amongst your domestics: to be sure 'tis not quite so expeditious a method of sending as the pigeons were formerly, and will not be adopted by the hurrying world, however I hope she will prove acceptable to your little community, as also her loading of flour and rice.

Upon my word, my dear Maria, I am one of those rich that ought to blush, I have examined my heart, and really think it is not want of feeling, it is the love of dissipation, 'tis want of thought, 'tis an eternal round of company; this is the mighty vortex that draws us from ourselves: I confess it is only you thinking mortals that know how to apply money justly.

I took your letter from my pocket and read it to my uncle, but no names, nor no place of abode. He said, whoever were my friends they had good hearts.

And

And you will allow, my Lord Duke, their heads are not deficient, to manage so cleverly?

Certainly; how much more rational do they spend their time than you, Harriet?

I grant it, (I returned) but one has been so used to a different way of acting, which way is become so habitual, that it is impossible to change; besides, were I to attempt it, I should be the ridicule of all my acquaintance—I should be crossed in love, going to turn methodist, and all the world's dread laugh, which not the stern philosopher can scorn, how then can a weak woman think to combat it?

Not at once, coz. but by degrees; as to cards, resolve to play but three times a week, I dare say your friends in the country can exist without seeing them at all.

They never play, I replied.

I did not think you connected with such reasonable beings.

True, your Grace, I have not many of such an odd turn of thinking in my catalogue, yet, odd as it is, one day or other I mean to copy them exactly; I have already ordered my steward to look out for a little snug mansion in
some

some pleasant villa, and the least disgust from male or female off I am.

May I not know the names of your acquaintance that have wrought such a wonderful change?

No, my Lord, their names and place of abode are a profound secret.

Why such secrecy, Harriet, if they are the good people you represent?—There must be a something that you are ashamed to bring to public view.

Far from it, (I replied) I glory in my friends, and were it not by their own desire, I would publish their names and transactions throughout this metropolis; a time will come, I doubt not, when I shall have the felicity of introducing them to your Grace, at present a cloud hangs over them, but not through any misconduct of their own.

Are they young? Are they handsome? He asked.

Youthful as Hebe! Beautiful as Venus!

A card that moment came from Lady Alton, to desire my company to the play, which put an end to our conversation.

You see, Sir, they will not let me alone.

But cannot you say no, Harriet?

I always

I always hated that monosyllable, uncle; when I ask a favor myself, I cannot bear to hear it; nor do I, when asked, like to utter it: there is such a rudeness annexed to it, that I have long since blotted it out of my dictionary.

There is no talking to you, you will have your own way, you are incorrigible.

I am sorry you think so, but do not despair, the sober age of thirty steals daily towards me, and then—

And then I have my doubts; when that comes you will be for stealing ten years longer.

Time, my Lord, time, will shew which of us is right. Adieu, Sir, I must go and consult about my dress, which I am now preparing to do, but I could not resist the propensity I had of telling you our conversation, that you might see how well I can keep a secret.

My old servant waits with the cow, I have charged him to call you Miss Aubreys, and not to tell who he comes from, nor any of my people whither he is going. Love to Frances.

Your's sincerely,

HARRIET BENTLY.

LETTER

LETTER XVI.

Lord Henry Bently to George Ashley, Esq.

DEAR GEORGE,

I HAVE been at Beauchamp's almost a week, on enquiring of his neighbour he tells me of two sisters, divinities he calls them, lately come to board at Mr. Smith's, their name is Aubrey, one he says is so extremely handsome it is impossible to describe her; they keep much at home, for we have walked every evening in the avenue adjoining to their house, yet cannot meet them.

One day after sitting in a deep reverie, Henry, can you tell whether I am in love I know so little of that passion that I cannot be a judge myself.

I laughed heartily at his reasoning to me, and asked him how I was to know the situation of his heart?

By the symptoms, he answered.
What are they?

In

In the first place, I have had a kind of uneasiness, hang about me ever since I saw this girl, I try every method to see her, I go constantly to church, and am grown excessively complaisant to the old rector, which never was the case before, presented them with several pines, and every rarity my hot house produces.

The last Sunday it rained excessively, I immediately offered my carriage; I intended it should look like a general compliment, but were I to be hanged I could not help addressing her particularly, she thanked me very civilly, said she must use herself to walk now she was become an inhabitant of the country, therefore would wait 'till the shower was over; they had remarked some good monuments which her sister and she had wished to examine, but that Mr. and Mrs. Smith, she thought, would be glad to avail themselves of my obliging offer, as the latter had not been very well. I saw her motive was to get rid of me, for as I had offered I could not avoid seeing them home, though I wished them to the deuce all the time.

Since that I am grown fond of walking, and whether I will or not my steps always lead to the parsonage. I've called twice under pretence of enquiring after Mrs. Smith's health, but they did not

E

appear,

appear, and I dream of her continually. They play exquisitely on the guitar, and I catch myself listening near the summer-house every evening, where at that time they generally are.

He waited for my reply—I said indeed it looked very like love.

And have you no desire, Hal. to see such perfections?

No, I have not the least curiosity.

I am glad to find you so different, for were you to appear I should have no chance; and yet want you to see her, to hear your opinion.

Capricious mortal (I replied) one moment you object, the other invite. Well then, since I pronounce it love, how mean you to proceed?

I have never asked my heart that question.

I think it is time you set about it?

I will interrogate myself this instant if you think it so necessary.—A pretty girl, of no family—accomplished but no fortune—shall Sir William Beauchamp, with five thousand a year take her for better for worse—endow her with all his worldly goods, she nothing to present him in return but a pretty person? No, forbid it all ye avaricious powers: Plutus, I bow beneath thy shrine—Cupid, you little malicious son
of

of a bad woman, I henceforth defy thee. This is my determination, Hal.

What is then to be done, (I returned) now you have so wisely determined—— will you continue here in the way of temptation?

No, I'll go to the County town, offer myself a candidate, they are just now in want of a representative, and in the bustle of an election obliterate every remembrance of love.

Love can that be so easily conquered (I answered) is not worth retaining. I wish I could take a lesson from your book. Give me the woman, Beauchamp, of my choice, and as to fortune you may take it if you please, for it is what I would not bestow a second thought on; however, I will attend you to your Borough, on purpose to see how you acquit yourself in your new character, how gracefully you will bow, cringe, and flatter, take the low vulgar by the hand, kiss their dirty wives,—

For heaven's sake no more.

You have often told me you had as soon run your country as stoop to such meannesses.

So I had, by Jupiter, but then this girl was not in the way.

In the midst of this altercation came a message from my father, to desire I

would leave Benkham the next day, he wanted me on very particular business: I have ordered my horses as soon as I have dined, for I am impatient to know the reason of my being sent for in such haste, I hope my father is not ill.

I write to acquaint you of my departure, that it might save you the trouble of coming, as you proposed, to meet

Your affectionate,

HENRY BENTLY.

To George Ashley, Esq.

LETTER XVII.

Lady Harriet to Lady Maria.

NOTHING could be more acceptable than your last kind present to your rustic friends; we held a consultation immediately

immediately on the arrival with our good rector, how best to dispose of her for the good of our subjects, as you call them, he has given them a field to keep her, and every day each family divides the milk with half a pound of rice: we have bought wood bowls and gave to each house, which they keep so clean it would delight you to see them.

When we introduced the cow, and told them it was sent by a friend of ours entirely for their use, I thought they would have, like the Israelites, fell down and worshipped it; the children ran and kissed her, on being acquainted they were to have puddings, &c. from it. Our principality now shines, every one is cheerful, neat, and satisfied; we had bows and courtesies in abundance, and as many petitions to heaven to reward and prosper you and us for our goodness.

Fanny is gone her journey, to see her old servant, whom she intends to remove to this village, she will sell her house and send the furniture here, she must stay till those matters are settled, that she might quit it for ever—You know not how I miss her.

We have been tormented almost ever since we resided here, by one of the neighbouring gentlemen: he was continually

tinually about the house, called twice on pretence of seeing Mr Smith, but we would not appear. Mrs Smith tells us we certainly have made a conquest.

He is all at once, from taking no notice of them, become so kind and civil ; expensive fruits of all kinds now grace our table, Hares, Partridges, &c. are dainties they never before tasted from his hands. The last visit he asked many questions concerning us, but took care not to particularize, therefore we are at a loss to know which of us is the favored one :—But this I can tell you, Harriet, we are not at all inclined to return the compliment, he is too bold and assuming to make a conquest of either. I desired the next time he came if he should mention us, that Mr. Smith would tell him we were women of very small fortunes, and had retired into the country on our parents death entirely for cheapness, for he was become quite troublesome, often spoiled our walk, because we would not give him an opportunity of joining us.

This has had the desired effect, we have not seen him since, I suppose he has reasoned with himself, (if he really had a penchant) 'till he has recalled his heart ; so you see, we have little chance if we were ever so desirous of changing
our

our names, money is the shrine they all bow to, and without it women are mere cyphers in the creation. But I will not lump the whole neither.

There are some, I make no doubt, that despise those mercenary views, and think there is intrinsic merit where gold has not a share.

Adieu, your trusty servant waits, otherwise I should have wrote a longer letter.

Your's ever,

MARIA ARMSTRONG.

LETTER XVIII.

Lord Henry to George Ashley, Esq.

DEAR GEORGE,

I MOUNTED my horse soon after I had sealed your letter, and was galloping along the turnpike road, when the summer-house Beauchamp spoke of appeared

appeared in view, I immediately drew in the reins and rode slowly on in hopes of hearing the music he declared so excellent, but no sound reached my ears.

The fast was thrown up, and I imagined no one was in it, therefore did not resist the propensity I had to see the inside, but judge my surprise when on a sofa sat the charming Maria fast asleep, her guitar by her side—I was instantly chained to the place, and some minutes passed before I could recover my astonishment.

Ye Gods (I cried) is it possible Lady Maria and Miss Aubrey are the same person? My voice I believe awoke her, for she started; her awaking so suddenly made me start also, and by that movement I suppose struck my spurs into the horse's side, (who you know is an ungovernable animal) made him set off full speed and in an instant I was out of sight.

My father's hasty message checked the wish I had to return and apologize for my rudeness, but how did I inveigh against my ill stars, and blame my want of curiosity: it made me almost mad to think I had been so near her a fortnight and had so good an opportunity as I might have had of cultivating her acquaintance; for the future I am determined to be as curious as any she in
Great

Great Britain, yet it was a pleasing circumstance to know the place of her residence, a secret I should never have come at the knowledge of but by this accidental view; it calmed my mind, and I stepped into the chaise as tranquil as the uncertainty of my father's health would admit.

When I arrived I enquired of the servants if he was well, and was happy to hear them answer perfectly so; what then can be the reason of his desiring me home, (I said to myself) sure he must have heard of Lady Maria's being in that part of the world, or has some new proposal to make me.

Whilst I was debating, his Grace came to meet me, accompanied by a handsome young man, and surprised me not a little by saying, Henry, I sent for you on purpose to meet our long sought for relation, the only surviving branch of the Grandison family, he is just arrived from the burning East, to seek his friends in a more temperate climate.

I welcomed him with real satisfaction, told him the occasion of my being absent, that I should with pleasure give up my trust, his tenants all would be happy to receive him as their master, for I had repeatedly told them I was only a deputy, and they all look for-

ward to the time when he should shew himself amongst them.

He said, the Duke had been telling the state of his affairs, that he felt our goodness, our generosity, in so strong a light, he knew not how to express the sense he had of such great obligations.

Indeed, George, I see I shall be very fond of this new relation, there is something so attractive, and so exceedingly interesting about him, that he steals the heart before one is aware of it. I should be as bad as Beauchamp if he was near a certain person, jealousy would I fear gain admittance; but I must guard myself against that passion, for ten to one when he goes to reconnoitre his estates, he will meet her.

In my next I will give you his history, at present I have only time to assure you, that I am ever

Sincerely your's,

HENRY BENTLY.

Augustus waits to introduce me to a friend that came over with him, I, in return have promised to introduce him to you.

LETTER

LETTER XIX.

Lady Maria to Miss Aubrey.

DEAR FANNY,

I HOPE ere this you have settled your affairs, and I shall soon have the happiness of welcoming you and old Sarah: You know not how I miss you, I am solitary, I am melancholy without my friend, and now plainly discover that with all my philosophy I should not have supported myself had you left me—since your absence I have had an odd kind of an adventure.

One day Mrs. Smith being engaged in her cares for the body, and our good rector as busy in the concerns of the soul, I took my little Fidelle with an intention of a long walk, but considering I was solo, only strolled up and down the garden 'till I had actually tired myself, and went into the summer-house to rest, I there fell into a kind of slumber, it was not sleep, for I heard every

every thing that passed; I was roused by those words—Is it possible my beloved Lady Maria and Miss Aubrey can be the same person? I started, but was in an instant immoveable when I saw Lord Henry Bently looking in at the window. I arose soon as my surprise would let me, but he was gone, and not the least appearance of him to be seen.

Do not think it a fiction, for I am as certain of the reality as that I now exist; yet what should bring him to this part of the world, and why disappear without speaking? why call me his beloved Maria? are questions I ask myself a hundred times a day.

Oh! my Frances, is it possible I am esteemed by the only man in the world I prefer? No, it must be an illusion, a dream, but it is such an one that has disturbed my repose, and recalled sensations that time and my own reasoning had in a great degree effaced.

But to what lengths am I running, and where has my unguarded pen led me? Yet think not, my dear Fanny, it was want of friendship that made me so secret, no, it was delicacy that forbade me to declare those sentiments; even now I have wrote it I cannot reconcile myself to such a declaration, nor would
I have

I have suffered my heart even to whisper it while I thought I was indifferent to him; reason and pride both called on me to subdue an hopeless passion, and I must yet attend to those harsh dictates; for, oh! his father! Think what he said, think what he made me suffer; the contrast of their behaviour first inclined my heart in his favour, for at that time I really could have embraced my bitterest enemy, had they shewn me a kindness—so much did the Duke terrify and depress my spirits.

Never, my friend, let this secret transpire, nor blame me for suffering such a passion to enter my heart, our inclinations are involuntary, and it is only by our conduct that we can counteract in some measure the ill effects of love; ever shall it be concealed, 'till I know from himself I am beloved, and then under restrictions 'till he can get his father to consent.

Since I wrote this, one of the cottagers came to present me with some berries she had gathered, told me there had been a very great gentleman to visit Sir Harry Beauchamp, almost as rich as the King, the servants said he was a Duke's son, and they suppose by this time he was a Duke himself, for they imagined his father dying he was sent
for

for in such haste—the mystery is now cleared, and this accounts for his not staying; if it is so, I shall be informed of every particular in Lady Harriet's next letter.

Our village friends enquire every day when you return, they are determined to meet you on the road notwithstanding all I can say to them, therefore do not be afraid, when you see the little army, of any hostile intentions, the olive branch will be held out as soon as you appear, they all long to see their other dear Lady (they say) once more amongst them, I am sure they cannot wish more for that pleasure than does, my dear Fanny,

Your affectionate,

MARIA ARMSTRONG.

Beauchamp has wrote me such a letter!

My God, how have I behaved to be so insulted, so degraded!

LETTER

LETTER XX.

Lord Henry to George Ashley, Esq.

I HAVE now a leisure hour, George, which I mean to dedicate to you. Augustus and Harriet are upon the wing, as usual, and I am left to amuse myself how I can, indeed they made me the offer of accompanying them, but I tell them it is a pity to spoil so good tete a tete. He is now her established gallant, and they are almost inseparable, I never saw her so constant before, she gives him the preference to all her swains, and I expect a hundred duels in consequence of her partiality, and am preparing to be called on every moment, as Grandison's second.

It is quite an undertaking to relate the history of this Adonis, but as you are desirous of hearing it, I will try to oblige you.

Know then, my father's eldest sister married General Grandison, he was a man of great fortune, and, a little like
the

the family he married into, extremely fond of money, he was of a haughty disposition, proud of his family and possessions, but so doatingly fond of his daughter than even his darling passion gave way to her desires, for he spared no expence to make her time pass agreeably.

She was passionately fond of music, they had public and private concerts continually, at which most of the officers were present. Fame speaks of her as one of the most accomplished and pleasing women then existing; she was universally admired, but knowing her father's disposition, every one feared to be particular, yet all wished to appear well in the eyes of the handsome Augusta.

The day before the battle of——he wrote a letter to my father, wherein he lamented his daughter's ill health, and dejection of spirits, which he supposed the consequence of it; from the most lively of her sex she was become the most melancholy; he was afraid the climate did not agree with her, and he believed she thought so also, for by her own desire he had taken a house in a village at a considerable distance from Jamaica, where she was just gone.

He

He was now going to meet the enemy, his future fate was in the hands of Providence, if destiny had marked him for a victim, begged he would take care of his darling Augusta, and his estate in England for her.

He wrote all that a fond parent could suggest to enforce this request, and concluded in that solemn way that the Duke shed tears when he read it, and said he could not help thinking it was his last, his farewell letter; indeed it was so, for the next account was from the public papers, which announced his death.

He immediately wrote to the place where his niece was, but received no answer, he then dispatched a trusty servant, but such a distance took up a considerable time before he could expect him—how greatly was he shocked and surprised at the recital he gave on his return—she was dead and had died in child-birth, that her son was taken away by a gentleman in mourning, whom no one knew nor had ever seen before, that he staid 'till she was buried, and then went away with her servant and child, but to what part of the world they were gone they were utter strangers: the lady had been seen writing for a week before she died, and they had

had observed her sealing packets, but that the gentleman they imagined must have taken them. The strictest search was made afterward by the Duke, but no trace of either father, infant, or servant.

Thus it rested for almost two and twenty years, 'till Augustus came himself, and unfolded more of this history, but a great part is still unknown.

His account is—he remembers to be taken care of by a woman who appeared very fond of him, whom he called mother, nor did he know but she was so 'till a person came, who told him, it was now time he left his nurse, she cried exceedingly at parting, her last words sunk deep in his heart—God bless you, Sir, may your relations in England one day or other find you, you will then be rich and powerful, for they are so. I dare tell you no more, a solemn oath and my future dependance prevents my being explicit, do not let even these words escape you.

Tell me then, my dear friend, if the person I am going with is my father?

She assured me he was not, nor any way related, notwithstanding he was called Davenport, the name I went by.

He

He arrived in England, and was placed in a very good school for some years, and then removed to Westminster.

When he was seventeen he received a letter to inform there was a place provided for him in the East Indies, his master had bills sent to defray every expence, and to provide necessaries for so long a voyage; the wind not being fair, he sat for his picture, by Mr. Davenport's desire. He asked that gentleman concerning his friends, but to no purpose, for on this subject he was totally silent.

On his arrival at Calcutta he was very well received, and soon placed in an advantageous situation, and by the next ship made acquainted, that as he was in so good a way of providing for himself, he must expect no more remittances.

Last year a box came, enclosed were two portraits set round with brilliants, the one of a lady, the other an old gentleman, in regimentals, on the paper that was folded round them were these words written—Augustus, behold your mother and grandfather, but as you value the love of your father, (your only surviving parent) never let any one see those miniatures; you are now of an age to be trusted, a certain period I feel will

will shortly arrive, when you shall be at liberty to make what enquiries you like. He kissed the pictures, and tied them round his neck, but ceased to enquire about them as he was requested.

He had now accumulated a pretty fortune and was tired of living in the Indies, and every day growing more anxious to visit England, he got his affairs in order so as to sail the next spring.

He did so, arrived in safety, and immediately went to find Mr. Davenport, who happily was living, and received him very cordially, he told him, he had wrote letters by the last Indiamen to desire to see him ; he then acquainted him of his father's death, and delivered two packets, one directed to the Duke of Langton, and another for himself ; in that he was told of his family by the mother's side, and the names of the portraits. The letter to my father I have copied for your perusal.

Augusta

Augusta to the Duke of Langton.

AS my dear, my beloved parent, is now no more, and an event hourly approaching when I believe my death inevitable, if my trembling hand can guide my pen, before that wished for period arrives, I will to your Grace explain the mystery of my present situation, my character, my family, my unborn infant demands it of me.

But suffer me, before I proceed, to plead for my child. Oh! Sir, if it lives protect it, protect it from its cruel father; let it, I beseech you, my Lord, find in you a relation, a parent; suffer not the grandchild of your sister to want a friend, to be thrown on an unpitied world, and I shall die satisfied. I know your goodness of heart and firmly rely on it, therefore will detain your Grace no longer on this subject.

You know, Sir, to what excess my father loved me, and that it was his whole study

study to give me pleasure—short hours of bliss, only to make the bitter cup of affliction still the harder to be borne!

We had concerts and balls continually, as those were my favorite amusements, most of the officers in Jamaica attended, amongst the constant ones was a subaltern of an exceeding good family, but no fortune, he excelled in music, dancing, and singing; his person was remarkably fine, and his address insinuating.

I soon saw his attention to me, but he had the art, by the most respectful behaviour, by a feigned timidity that seemed to wish I should know he loved, yet fearful to offend by a declaration; to cloak the most aspiring mind he neglected nothing that he thought would inspire me with a partiality:—His songs were all calculated to soften the heart—he sung of hopeless love, the happiness to be found in an humble station, and when he caught me attentive, would paint despair in such lively colours that the sympathetic tear was ready to start from my eyes, 'till at last my heart, caught by those exterior charms, yielded, and I was weak enough to think him the only man in the world possessed of qualifications to make me happy; yet when

when I considered my father's love of money, his family pride, I strove to crush every favorable sentiment.

But, how unstable are the resolves of sixteen! For no sooner was I with him than my resolutions dissolved in air, and I became more his than ever, and in an evil hour confessed my love, and told him I would try to get my father's consent.

Had you seen him then, you would, like me, thought his entire happiness depended on my words, he was all rapture, all thankfulness, but objected strenuously against my asking the General's consent, he entreated on his knees I would not, for he then should lose me for ever; but if I would but consent to a private marriage, when it was irrevocable, my father's love would prevail, and he would be brought to forgive.

In short, for three months I combated with him and my heart, but the General being obliged to leave me for a fortnight, he never ceased soliciting 'till he had gained his point—we were married by an intimate friend of his.

When my father returned I had not the courage to acquaint him with it though daily importuned by my husband; yet, willing to know his sentiments

ments of him, I asked, what kind of man and what he thought of Lieutenant ———, his answer chilled my blood.

As to his person and politeness (he said) he thought them unexceptionable, but his private character was that of a professed libertine, a gamester, a man of no principle, I have countenanced him as a visitor, because he has the address to make himself useful and agreeable, but never could I make such an one my friend.

He luckily was called out, and my husband entering soon after, saw me in tears, and asked the reason. I told him the conversation, for I was above disguise, but had you seen his looks, my Lord, you would not wonder at the condition I was in.

He tauntingly said, I ought to have looked to that before, but now I was married it was not a time to upbraid, and as I knew part he would add a little more, that he was deeply in debt, and that he must have my fortune, otherwise a jail must be his place of residence.

I entreated he would not yet speak to my father, that he would surely disinherit me, 'till I had found some method of bringing him by degrees to approve him; if he would no longer frequent the gaming table, the General would

would hear of this reformation, and it would be one step towards it.

And pray who has he got to leave his riches to, that you talk of disinheriting?

A nephew whom he loves next myself. If he had known that, I might have gone to the devil for a husband for him; then flung out of the room with such a look as even now terrifies me to think of it.

I fainted and was in strong hysterics for an hour after; It was the first time I had ever an angry word, and now from a man whom but a month before was the most fawning lover—so soon to take upon him the tyrant—a man for whom I had deceived the best of fathers—the reflection made me miserable, it was more than I could bear.

My situation at last made it necessary to quit that part of the world; my dear, my injured father, saw the alteration, and imputed it to the air, his physicians fortunately were of his way of thinking, and I was ordered a great way up the country.

I will pass over our parting, it was too affecting to relate; he gave me to the amount of a thousand pounds, which was almost all he had by him, as he said he expected to be called to the
F field,

field, it might be safer in my hands than his.

You know the event of the battle, I have my own maid with me, and have ordered her to deliver this packet and my infant if it lives into your hands, I am waiting for the hour of my dissolution, with a degree of impatience.

Farewell, farewell for ever, may we meet in the regions of bliss is the sincere prayer of your unfortunate and affectionate niece,

AUGUSTA.

His father continued—After your mother was gone my heart smote me, but the love of gambling suppressed every humane feeling, and steeled my heart to the wrongs of suffering innocence. I wished her death, as I found I should not be benefited by her, for her father had made a will and settled the whole of his fortune on herself and children, and left the Duke, his brother in law, in trust for him; and especially now as another victim had presented, for I had been introduced to a lady who had an immense fortune at her own disposal, no father nor no brother to interfere,

terfere, and I saw if it had not been for this unfortunate connexion I should soon be master of her possessions, and own that I was wicked enough to hope the hour that gave birth to a child would deprive the mother of existence, as she was so emaciated and weak.

I kept a servant in disguise near her, to give me the first intelligence—it was as I wished, you was born and she died. I got leave of absence for a fortnight, had her buried, discharged what was owing, took all her cash, and with her maid and child sat off for a different part of the island, I paid her handsomely and made her take a solemn oath never to discover whose child it was: the General was killed in battle before she died, that I was not at all suspected.

I soon married the woman I had in view, and by her I had a daughter, I kept back your mother's letter to the Duke, as you may suppose, but would not destroy it, resolved if you outlived me to order it for your inspection, that you might be acquainted with the history of one of the most amiable, and by my means, one of the most miserable of her sex.

Mr. Davenport will give this, and your mother's packet designed for her uncle, with the portrait of your sister.

I have erased my name, nor can I now suffer myself to tell it you, even when I am no more. No, I cannot bear the thought that a child of mine should know to what a wretch he owes his being.

When I take a retrospection of my life, the agonies of my mind are not to be described, your mother is always before me, and were I not fearful of adding to the number of my sins, by suicide, I should not wait for the slow hand of death. May you, my dear Augustus, take warning by your father, shun gaming and drinking, for those, be assured, are the seeds of every vice.

Your sister is all a fond father could wish, she also, like yourself, deserves a better parent. I cannot be more explicit; reflection makes me mad; I have wrote her christian name under her picture, and a device which in future may lead to the other.

Adieu, farewell for ever, may you be as happy as your father is miserable.

Augustus waited on the Duke with these letters, and by the likeness of the family convinced him he was his nephew; the miniature of the General and his

his daughter he instantly knew, and pressed the young Augustus to his heart. He insisted on his living with us 'till he takes possession of his estates, and a most deserving man I assure you he is. I feel already the sincerest friendship for him.

I have not yet seen the miniature of his sister, the glass was broke, and he had sent it to be repaired, and has now ordered it to be set the same as the others; he is very anxious to find her, and declares she shall have half his fortune whenever he is so happy.

I have curtailed his father's letter, it was so long, as it is I am absolutely tired with writing, as I suppose you will be with reading.

Your's, &c.

HENRY BENTLY.

LETTER

LETTER XXI.

Lady Harriet to Lady Maria.

HEIGH HO, Maria, I could almost persuade myself I am in love! Henry has such a friend, such a relation, such an angel of a fellow, lately imported from the East, as is beyond me to describe, with such a princely fortune, and such an extraordinary history annexed as staggers all belief.

They must have kindred souls, for as soon as they saw each other they were as one. I tell them I intend writing their histories by the names of Jonathan and David, that their love is passing the love of women.

Augustus says, Harry he owns is the friend of his soul, but that there is a female in the world who is sovereign of his heart.

A pretty definition this (I returned) for friendship to be held in higher estimation than love.

But

But is it not possible that love and friendship should center in one? (Says Hal.)

Certainly, and I hope if ever Cupid thinks proper to wound me, the shafts may be tipped with friendship, for on no other basis should I think it permanent.

You reason so well, Lady Harriet, of course your choice must be good, I should like to be acquainted with the happy man that is honored with your notice, will you be kind enough to introduce me, for sure you must ere this have selected one amongst the number of your admirers.

Indeed I have not, Augustus, I find the creatures necessary to escort and attend me to public places, to fetch and bring; if I am dull their flattery makes me laugh myself into spirits again, but I defy the whole tribe to say I ever distinguished one of them by any partiality. No, my friend, they are not the kind of beings I should chuse a companion for life from.

Now since I have been so honest to tell you my sentiments without reserve, say where I shall find this sovereign of your heart, as you call her? Shall I meet her freezing on the Greenland shore, or burning under the torrid zone;

is

is she amongst the soft Italians, warbling sweet notes of love, or standing foremost with the fair daughters of Circassia? In short, is she Christian, Turk, or Jew?

A Christian, and an European—a country where I see every perfection centered.

Of what part of Europe?

England, and of this Metropolis.

Ah, so near? Well then, since it is so, I shall have a rout to-morrow evening, where I shall expect Hal. and you will attend: People of the first distinction and beauty will be present, and from this circle I shall call upon you to point her out, they promised to be there and so we parted.

Now would I give a part of my little finger to know the favored she, his sister's miniature is not yet in his possession, it is to be set with brilliants before he exhibits her to public view; much as I wish to find her, I am more anxious to know the other female, when the day is over I will inform you if any thing material transpires.

Well, they attended, and I took an opportunity of Augustus and Hal's sitting down by me of interrogating the former, by saying, of all the birds in the air, and all the fishes in the sea, find me out

out your idol. Not a word. I proceeded. Is it the beautiful Eliza? No, she is fat and clumsy. The fair Leonora? She looks simple. The graceful Armida? She is too tall and too much given to flirtation. One had no character in her face, another was affected, self conceited, indeed no one pleased. I told him since I found him so difficult I believed his Dulcinea existed only in imagination.

One day or other, Lady Harriet, I will convince you to the contrary.

When I see a proper opportunity, and when he thinks you will be able to keep a secret, replied Hal.

I told them I was never more inclined to secrecy than at that present moment.

But why are you so inquisitive, Harriet, you never asked me half so many questions in your life on this subject.

I could almost have killed him he spoke and looked at me in such a manner, I see I must be more circumspect in future, for he has more penetration in this way than I was aware of. I thought the blind deity had nothing to do with him, and he of course not acquainted with any manoeuvres of his godship, but now I begin to think he has some favorite in secret, I am sure it

is not openly, for he looks upon our finest females with all the fang froid of fourscore. Provoking wretches! I hate such secret mortals; patience is my only remedy I see, you must possess it in a great degree to read all the trifling nonsense of your friend,

HARRIET BENTLY.

Inclosed I send you Augustus's history, he has introduced his friend to me that came over with him, he is certainly an elegant man, but so sedate in his manners, so like Henry, would sooner be poring over musty books than flirting with the ladies, and I dare say would rather hear a sermon than a play, so that you may be assured he does not suit my taste quite so well as our new relation; yet I pity the youth, he looks as if he was crossed in love, there is a something sits heavy on his heart I am certain.

LETTER

LETTER XXII.

Lord Henry to George Ashley, Esq.

AUGUSTUS has declared his sentiments to me in favor of Lady Harriet, and asked my opinion of her disposition, her character in private life, for if that did not answer his most sanguine wishes, dear as he loved her, inclination should not get the better of prudence: No one, he observed, could be a judge of another by seeing them in public, for they must be diabolical tempers to shew moroseness when every thing conspired to make them happy; but from our long acquaintance he hoped to be justly informed, and from that information he would be entirely governed.

I answered him, as he had called on me to declare my opinion, I could not help telling him she was all deception.

He started, looked grave—Is it possible, Henry, Lady Harriet with all that openness of temper should be—

Every

Every thing you could wish, (I returned) his countenance brightened in a moment, and he was all attention.

Under the mask of gaiety she has the most feeling heart in the world; tell her but a mournful tale, the tear of pity accompanies your words, and if it is possible to find out the object she will relieve them under a feigned name.

She has an aunt that lives with her, who by a variety of misfortunes was reduced to a very scanty income, she is a most excellent woman, but her being poor was a sufficient reason with the haughty Earl, her brother, to take no notice of her, but as soon as Harriet was her own mistress, she sent and entreated her to reside with her, and in such a manner, you would have thought the obligation was on her side; she loved her niece, and knew the goodness of her disposition, which made her acquiesce with pleasure.

As soon as she came she settled two hundred a year upon her, that she might not be obliged to come to her when she wanted; and now, whenever she is ill, and though dressed for any public diversion, she instantly declines going and will not leave her.

She has an excellent taste for drawing, but this talent is lost, for she throws her

her performances aside ; what others would boast of, and hang as ornaments round their rooms, I have seen scattered on the floor : She plays inimitably, and has a charming voice, yet none but her most intimate friends ever knew she possessed either of those accomplishments, you have seen how gracefully she dances.

He was all rapture, he shook me by the hand a thousand times ; for my part I thought him out of his senses ; she was beyond his fondest hopes. I assured him he would find I did not exaggerate when he knew her as well as I did.

After this conversation we went to call on her, the housekeeper told us her Lady had kept late hours the preceding night, and was then in bed.

It was pity, (I said) she should sit up so late, it must be prejudicial to her health.

God forbid, (says the old creature) whenever she dies I shall not long survive ; for she is not only the best of mistresses, but the kindest of friends ; there is not a groom in her stable when ill but she attends to : She sat up with Lady Gertrude last night, who we thought dying, and no person could prevail on her to quit her 'till after five o'clock this morning, when she went
to

to take a little rest, though she charged me not to mention it, for she will never take any merit to herself. I have lived in this house forty years with her good mother; the butler and coachman the same; she never changes, and there is not one of us but would lay down our lives for her: Besides, she is always so cheerful, and tries to make us all so happy, that our house is a little Paradise. Her aunt coats on her, and she is equally fond of her aunt; but who is there could help loving so sweet a young lady with so much beauty and so many perfections, and such a deal of riches without any pride?

She would have talked on for an hour, and Augustus have staid two to have heard her, had not I took out my watch and reminded him of time.

As we were walking home, of a sudden he was so exceeding grave that I could not help remarking it, for not a word could I get to any one question; till at last—Henry, I am afraid so much perfection will not fall to my lot, I have a thousand fears I shall be rejected.

Nay, (I returned) as to that I know not what to say to it, for she is a whimsical lass in regard to love, and has refused a number we thought very good offers; this I know, you must draw her
in

in by stratagem, she is not to be won in the common way I assure you. He says to-morrow he will know his doom, and repeated those lines out of some author,

When puzzling doubts the anxious bosom seize,
To know the worst is some degree of ease.

With this determination we parted.

I have wrote you such a long letter that I think 'tis time we part also by bringing it to a conclusion. Adieu, believe me ever your's,

H. BENTLY.

LETTER XXIII.

Lady Harriet to Lady Maria.

MARIA, I have been taken in since I last wrote, fairly bit—I have a vast mind to foil them, 'tis not a right proceeding. I will tell you the whole, that you may form some judgment of

of the matter and give me your opinion.

The day after my rout the two beaux called on me, Henry began—were you not a little disappointed, coz. last night not to see Augustus's mistress in your set?

So much so, that I have set it down in my imagination as merely ideal, only formed to raise my curiosity.

Upon my honor (said Augustus) I wish I was as sure of a reciprocal esteem as I am certain she now exists.

Why, if there is such a being, (I returned) this is a material point towards matrimony; have you been refused?

No, I have never yet have the confidence to declare myself.

Introduce her to me, I may say something in your favor that may influence her to think well of you.

I am infinitely obliged to you, Lady Harriet, but until I know she will accept me, I cannot think of making her known to my friends.

Have you doubts? I asked.

Many.

What are they?

In the first place, she, like yourself, is beautiful, sensible, possessed of so many accomplishments, and has so many admirers, I can have but little chance:

chance: she is also rich, of course wants no augmentation to her fortune, and of so lively a disposition that I am afraid she will laugh when I attempt being serious, and my person may not suit her taste, and she not knowing from what family of my father's side I sprung to a woman of high birth may be a material objection. Now, my dear Lady Harriet, put yourself in her place, and tell me ingenuously whether you think I have not reason to fear; and if, from what you say, I can have the least ground for hope, I will promise to bring you acquainted before many days are elapsed.

It is impossible, Augustus, to answer with any degree of certainty for another; for our dispositions and our way of thinking is as different as our faces.

This I grant (said he) yet you might tell me something a little consolatory.

Well then, (I replied) as I am just now inclined to pity, I should suppose, however volatile your mistress might be, yet, when made an offer of marriage seriously, she will not hesitate telling her real sentiments, nor, without she is a coquet, accept you if she did not intend being your wife—your person certainly cannot be objected to, and your family (as the part known is truly noble

noble and respectable) is sufficient for any reasonable being——your history must create pity, and will certainly forward your suit with a good heart, instead of being an obstacle.

Could I flatter myself the Lady would, when I come to an eclaincissement, think as you do, I should be the happiest of men.

Do not fear, go make the declaration as soon as possible, for I am impatient to know this Paragon of perfection.

Henry, who till now was silent, took my hand—I cannot say as Nathan did to David, thou art the man, but I can with truth reverse it, and say, thou art the woman.

Me, Henry ? (with a colour as red as scarlet) I exclaimed.

Yes, Lady Harriet, (said Augustus) it is you, and only you, that ever had possession of my heart : In short he ran over the usual cant of lovers, and after he had talked himself out of breath,

Hal. began, said it was impossible I could now retract—the other hoped, entreated, that at last they fairly worried me into a kind of compliance, exacted a sort of confession that my heart had dictated my words, though I had no conception the person meant was myself, nor indeed had I.

My

My uncle has congratulated me on my choice, Lady Gertrude approves it, yet for all this when I think of their art I have half a mind to run counter to all their expectations, and declare myself a free woman; I have hinted some such thing, but they will not hear a word.

Henry and my swain (since it must be so) are going to Belleville to-morrow, to have it properly fitted up for my Ladyship's summer residence; one comfort, I shall be free from their importunities some weeks. I have a vast notion this seat is in your neighbourhood, I will make enquiries, but, never fear, they shall be secret ones, and will let you know. Is Frances returned? My best love attend you both, and believe me ever affectionately and sincerely

Your's,

HARRIET BENTLY.

LETTER

LETTER XXIV.

Lady Maria to Lady Harriet.

MY dear Harriet you are right; Belleville is in our neighbourhood. I was walking this morning with Fanny in the avenue that leads from the house, the end I believe I told you opened to the turnpike road, when we saw at a distance two gentlemen, as they drew near I thought one had the air of Lord Henry, if so, we naturally concluded the other must be Mr. Grandison; we had a mind to return, but a propensity to see your lover got the better of our prudence, and we both at that moment forgot our being incog. and our resolves not to be known by any former acquaintance, and instead of fearing a discovery, there we stood fixed 'till they came so near that it was impossible, without rudeness, to have turned, indeed it was visible they were coming towards us.

Lord Henry advanced, bowed respectfully—Surely I am greatly deceived if I
have

have not the happiness of meeting Lady Maria Armstrong.

Indeed, Sir, you are not, I am the person you mention, known here by the name of Aubrey, and by that name, my Lord, if we ever meet again I beg you will address both my friend and me, we pass for sisters, and wish it was only our affection that constituted our relationship; but, alas! my Lord, you are not ignorant we are so in affliction, I know. Lady Harriet has acquainted you with every thing relating to us.

Often indeed has she spoke of her two friends, and with tears recounted the occurrences of your lives, but never could I hear in what part of the world you resided, nor should I ever have known had not chance fortunately presented me with a sight of you, but I believe you was not sufficiently awake to distinguish the person who had the rudeness to intrude on your retirement.

I smiled.

What did you then see me? (he said) I will tell you another time what brought me there. (I never gave you the account of that rencontre, but I will one day or other, at present I will finish our conversation) but, I must now beg leave to introduce my friend Grandison, one whom Lady Harriet has made happy, by preferring

preferring him to the rest of his sex, which, as her correspondent, I dare say you know.

We both congratulated him on his choice; I told him, it had given me the sincerest pleasure, to hear we were likely to have you so near us for the summer months, and that I was in great hopes when you had tasted the sweets of retirement you would, like us, have not a wish to return.

All the time I was speaking your lover appeared lost in thought, at last, without taking any notice of our conversation—Have you a brother, Miss Aubrey?

No, Sir, I never had either brother or sister.

Are you sure, Madam, your father had not two wives?

I never heard him mention a former engagement.

Pray what is the name of your family?

Armstrong, he was Earl of——.

Pardon me, my dear Madam, for asking you such a number of questions, I was in hopes in you I should have found a lost sister.

In me, Sir? I said with surprise.

Yes, for a greater likeness never could exist.

His friend stood amazed.

I do

I do not wonder at your astonishment, Lord Henry, but I will immediately order the miniature you heard me speak of to be sent here, you will then be convinced I have some grounds to build on. O, Miss Aubrey, tell me you are not quite assured of your father's being a widower when he married your mother, for my heart would fain call you sister.

I confess, Sir, that I find myself so much prepossessed in your favor, that it would be the extremest felicity if I could return you a satisfactory answer, but indeed there is not the least shadow even for hope.

I must then crush those pleasing ideas the sight of you raised, but it is not without pain I quit them: though fate has denied me calling you by the endearing appellation of sister, suffer me to have a place in your friendship. I acquiesced with pleasure, and we of all sides promised to be good friends and neighbours, they invite themselves to drink coffee with us in the afternoon, and after a good deal of chit chat we parted.

We had been absent so long that dinner had waited, we told Mrs. Smith what had kept us, that we had met with a lover and a relation of the Lady who
sent

sent the cow. She hoped we had invited them to see us, for she should be happy to shew all the respect in her power to any friends of so good a Lady. We told her they would be with us in the afternoon. She would then make a feed-cake immediately, the tables were to be rubbed, the best parlour to be set in order, the currant wine placed in readiness for them after their walk, and she was to be as good and as busy as you can imagine—as soon as dinner was over the preparations were to begin.—I have left them over head and ears in bustle, in order to write you so far of our proceedings.

Fanny has brought her old servant here, she is at present in the house with us, 'till we can place her in a comfortable situation; she was overjoyed to see me, asked how her good benefactress, Lady Harriet, did, begged her duty, is so happy to hear you are coming to live at Belleville, says she will walk to the top of the hill every day in order to see the place you inhabit, for even the sight of it will do her good. She is acquainted with all the cottagers already, and has taken the superintendence of the rice and flour—your second supply was most graciously received, though I assure

you

you our store-house gave us no intimation of a famine.

The rector has had all the bells set in order against the happy day;—Sarah says she hopes Lady Harriet will not be long thinking of it, for her maxim is—happy is the wooing that is not long doing. I see our two beaux are coming up the avenue, therefore I must conclude—Fanny's love and mine attend you.

Your's, &c.

MARIA ARMSTRONG.

LETTER XXV.

Lady Harriet to Lady Maria.

'TIS true, 'tis wonderful, 'tis passing strange, from henceforward I hail thee Lady of the Manor of Kingston, Augustus's sister, joint heiress of the Grandison estate, for you are, you must, you shall

G

shall be, the lost the much wished for she—but laying aside all heroics, I sincerely congratulate you on having found so amiable a brother, and with him so good a fortune, for on the marriage articles half of his possessions are made over to you.

Now what will my uncle say? No caveat now to thwart his son's inclinations, for well I know Henry's heart is set on you. How would he listen to your mournful history, ask the minutest questions, sigh, beg a repetition, 'till he saw me inclined to smile at his importunities, then would take his hat and disappear.

Ah! Hal. (often have I said when he was gone) in vain thou strivest to disguise thy heart from me, for to him I dared not talk on the subject, knowing his promise to his father, and his Grace's obstinate perseverance in the love of money, I could not encourage a passion I had the sincerest desire to promote.

I hear you say, Harriet, why will you run on so, it cannot be, I am not that fortunate person your wishes would bespeak me. But I have seen your picture, Maria, and you are one and the same; I have sent it with a letter to Augustus, examine every feature, you will

will find them all your own ; and suppose you are not, in so many years the real one may be dead, he can never find so good a substitute, no, not one so like, so accomplished, so every thing as yourself, therefore accept him, and henceforward be brother and sister.

I long to hear your sentiments on his history, and whether you think there might be a possibility of his being the Earl of——, your father's son.

I have been to Mrs. Grenville, she says she never knew your father 'till he married your mother, she was her intimate friend—she is sure she never heard of his having a wife before her; this again puzzles, but it cannot neither when we recollect his first marriage was a secret—still there is a hope.

I am busy preparing for this mighty change, a wife, heaping up for myself perhaps a world of cares—a wife, a slave—they stoop to conquer, we rule and then obey. I will not think—tell me your thoughts, you know us both; tell me before the fatal words are past—Try him, quarrel with him, play cards, disappoint him, see with what temper he bears it—I have done all this, but can make nothing of him, men will disguise their tempers where they profess to love.

Be quick in your answer, do not think me like the generality of people that ask advice, but mean to take their own opinion, for positively I will be ruled by what you say, or never believe

Your affectionate,

HARRIET BENTLY.

Tell my dear Frances I expect her to help you.

LETTER XXVI.

Lady Maria to Lady Harriet.

MY DEAR HARRIET.

OUR time is absolutely taken up as when we lived in the gay world, for this last fortnight Lord Henry is continually with us, and Augustus whenever he can spare time from his workmen.

Your

Your coz. has made an hundred apologies for his father's behaviour, hoped I would not look on him in an unfavorable light from any thing that had happened that day. I told him I was sorry he should mention it, that would be acting what we had both been condemning.

To-morrow Mr. and Mrs. Smith are invited to accompany me and Frances to Belleville Lodge, that we may see if there is any thing yet to be added to compleat it for the reception of your Ladyship. Our good old couple are so charmed with the young men, that if they miss but a day from calling, which seldom happens, there is an hundred questions asked, and messages sent to enquire after their healths.

I have this moment received your's, and have seen the miniature in question, I must confess it very like, but on strict examination I think there is more colour in the face than I have, and the hair appears not quite so dark as mine; the Circassian dress makes me think from that part of the world Augustus will find his sister; indeed I cannot be her, it is next to an impossibility, nor would I claim kindred for the universe were I not quite assured—To wrong another! far be it from me: Depend upon

upon it she will one day or other be found; Why should we think it more strange than it was for Augustus after so many years to make his appearance!

I am rather a prophets in some things you know, Harriet, therefore listen to me as you would to the oracle of Delphos—I pronounce Augustus the only man in the world to make you happy, without trials, without any hesitation I aver it. Your house is ready, and we counting the hours that will bring us together, with a satisfaction known only to real friends. Your lover is to take this letter with him, he is coming on the wings of love to meet you, joy sparkles in his eyes, and his whole thoughts are employed on his Harriet.—Fanny will take the pen.

As to his friend, gloomy despair marks every feature, he has confessed his love, and the cruel predicament he is now in with his father. When he left Maria, he begged she would sometimes think and pity the unfortunate Henry; he stopped as if afraid to proceed—she saw his unhappiness and gave him her hand, said, my Lord I will do both, and if it will add to your satisfaction, be assured whilst you persevere in obeying your father I will think of no other man, time may alter his opinion, but if not, we must

must content ourselves as friends; this be assured, I never will marry without his consent, nor shall I think well of you if you were to wish it. He thanked her again and again for her goodness, and now appeared satisfied, after many attempts to go with reluctance at last he left us.

You see, my dear Harriet, I cannot keep a secret, I should not have slept to night had I not told it; I think betwixt friends there should be no reserve, Maria's delicacy would not let her acquaint you with those transactions, I know, yet, at the same time wished you to hear them.

How contradictory are lovers, thank God I have no trials of this sort, yet I sigh in concert; the losing our two companions has infected our little society with melancholy, come then, and with your presence enliven us, our hope rests on you, do not protract the time for the sake of your friends,

MARIA AND FRANCES.

LETTER

LETTER XXVII.

Lady Harriet to Lady Maria.

AUGUSTUS is returned and brought his credentials with him. It gives me inexpressible pleasure to find my two dearest friends think so well of my h-u-f-b-a-n-d that is to be, 'tis a hard word to write, but now fixed past recalling, my promise is given and next Thursday I give up the name of Bently for—an odd kind of predicament this, not to know what my real name will be, though I am persuaded it will be found in the end Armstrong; Maria, we shall take each others names and be declared sisters one day or other depend upon it.

As soon as the ceremony is over we leave town, aunt Gertrude is to accompany the happy pair; my housekeeper and steward will be with you on Tuesday, I beg old Sarah may be there to receive them. What an honest trio! I look upon them as invaluable. We take post horses, relays are ordered on the road,

read, that we shall be with you early on Saturday evening.

I anticipate our meeting with a satisfaction not to be described; Henry is to follow us in a day or two, though rather against papa's inclinations I believe, for he has heard some how or other of your living near Belleville, but confiding on his son's promise he has not put a negative on his journey, tho' much he fears your attractions.

I told him the other day I should think it the height of felicity to find you the sister of Augustus—He looked astonished—What could induce me to imagine there was a possibility of it? I would not mention the miniature, for I intend to surprise him shortly with the sight of it—Your father's character and your age corresponding, and a number of &c's. I said, besides which, I would not at present enlarge upon.

Indeed he said there was too great a similitude in their lives, that you certainly had been cruelly used.

And yet, my Lord, how nobly she supports those cruelties, adversity makes her shine with greater lustre; the mind that is truly noble, like her's, no outward storms can ruffle: She murmurs not at her fate, nor loads her parent's memory with execrations, for she has

prudence to be silent on a subject that others would enlarge upon; she possesses philosophy sufficient to despise the rich man's contumely, and generosity to forgive and pity his weakness. He absolutely blushed, for I spoke it to himself, he felt it and I was rejoiced.

After some time—you speak the language of friendship, Harriet, every virtue is then magnified, and every fault suppressed.

Every word is a fact, Sir, nor would I, believe me, buy your good opinion for Maria, at the expence of truth, for the universe: I speak from a thorough knowledge of her heart, a long acquaintance with the inmost recesses of it. Those letters I read to you were her's, they were the genuine dictates of an exalted soul.

All I can say, (he replied) is, she deserves a better fate.

And yet you will not be the instrument of procuring her one.

What do you mean?

Suppose Hal. should like her, and should be wretched without her?

I cannot suppose any such thing, Lady Harriet; if it was so, do you think I would consent that the heir to a Dukedom should marry a girl with scarcely a farthing? No, all your rhetoric

toric will never persuade me to that, I promise you.

Avarice is the rock, my Lord Duke, I see you are determined to split upon. However I do not despair of a more prevailing argument than any I have made use of.

Company coming in put a stop to our conversation—I have not time to add another syllable. To-morrow—would it were over, never did I wish for you more than at this present moment, I cannot think, write, or speak on the subject.

Your's,

H. BENTLY.

My best love to Fanny, tell her I am obliged to her for her intelligence; it was what I always thought would happen.

LETTER

LETTER XXVIII.

*Augustus Grandison, Esq; to Charles
Harcourt, Esq.*

I EXPECT Lord Henry every day, I wish you could make it convenient to come with him, for I long to introduce you to my female friends in this part of the world.

You will not be a little surpris'd to find in a village two of the most amiable and accomplished women in England; Fanny, the youngest, I have allotted for you, she must be your's, it is an impossibility to see her and not be pleas'd, she has such an agreeable variety in her manner, such vivacity, so affectionate to her sisters as she calls my Harriet and Maria, so attentive to the Rector and his wife, where she lives, kind to her old servant, humane and charitable to all the villagers, that you will, you shall be captivated.

But think not, because I mention Fanny first, the other is wanting in perfections;

fections; No, I must confess her the finest person, and rather the handsomest face, but they are very different beauties—Frances is below the middle size, delicately formed, and exquisitely fair: the other is a brunette, tall and majestic like Harriet, she looks born to rule a world, and is possessed of every accomplishment with the other, but she I have every reason to think is bespoke, and were the other known, or in any other place than so retired an one, she would not long remain single, without it is her choice, take my word for it; therefore come soon, ere this prize is taken.

We shall be visited I make no doubt by all the neighbouring families, of course Frances will be known, and she wants only this to be admired: Besides, if you ever wish to be cheerful, to rub off that gloom on your countenance, believe me you have a much greater chance of doing it, of being happy in a lively domestic family, than in a crowded city, in a round of dissipation, in a mixed confused company, which only catch the eye and cause a momentary attention, without giving the heart the least satisfaction; where happiness flies at our approach, or dances on the imagination like an ignis-fatuus before the
fight.

fight. Here you have friends to hear, to sooth, to please—Come, then, resolve either to marry, or set yourself down with us en famille—we shared each others afflictions in our long voyage, do not let us on shore be less friendly, but as you then partook my sorrows so do now my felicity; I wait with open arms to receive you, my Harriet will with pleasure welcome my friend, Maria and Frances have promised to do all they can to divert you, our Rector and his wife will play whist and backgammon with you, therefore give over a fruitless search, and haste to Belleville, you'll greatly add to the satisfaction of

Your faithful and sincere friend,

AUGUSTUS GRANDISON.

LETTER

LETTER XXIX.

Charles Beauchamp, Esq; to Lord Henry Bently.

SO I am fairly distanced, Henry, the election has stripped my pocket of its cash, and those she devils robbed me of my senses. O how could I curse my ill stars, and how entertain thee with virulence was I not afraid my letter would be thrown aside before you had half gone through it.

Yet, have I not cause? For who should have thought such demure innocent looking country girls, as I supposed them, should have been people of rank, should have been such adepts in the art of deceiving? Faith, Hal. all I can say, they are women, it was handed down from their grandmother Eve; tempters and deceivers they will be to the end of the chapter, and we shall be their dupes.

How shall I look her in the face after my behaviour?—No, it cannot be done, I am off, going to the Continent to retrieve—

trieve—let this pass with the world, the real cause is *entre nous*; for, do you know, I wrote such a letter after you had left me to Maria, as would shock you, I suppose her pride has kept her from divulging it.

Your Ladyship would choke me, I could not pronounce the word if I had brass enough to get over the other—at this very moment I am as much in love as ever—fool that I was not to follow the dictates of my heart—No, money, money was the shrine I worshipped, and I have been justly rewarded for my avarice! I begin to think with the old, it is the root of all evil; however, if I go on as I have lately I shall not long be troubled with it—What had I to do with elections?—But 'tis past, there is no recalling time. Do let me know their history, for 'tis a mighty confused strange one has been told me.

I have let my house for seven years, to our old acquaintance Colonel Bowen, who is just come from Ireland—I met him accidentally, he was telling me he wanted either to rent or buy an estate in the country, to reside the hunting season, I told him he was welcome to mine, that I should be absent some years, and gave the above reasons for absenting myself; he was glad of the offer,

offer, we presently agreed on terms, and next week you will see him your neighbour.

He was happy to hear of your being near. I have told him of the two witches that infest that part of the world, and begged him to take care of himself, referred him to you for an introduction. Excuse the shortness of this, for I never was in a worse cue for writing. My next will be from Paris, 'till then adieu.

Your's with sincerity,

CHARLES BEAUCHAMP.

LETTER XXIX.

Lady Maria to Mrs. Grenville.

I RECEIVED your letter by Lady Harriet, indeed, my dear Mrs. Grenville, I feel myself happier than at any one period of my life: my good friends settling for more than half the year so near

near me, is a satisfaction beyond my pen to describe—the friendly trio, as you used to call us, is now met, never I hope to be separated for any length of time again.

I am afraid to encourage the idea of my being Augustus's sister, and yet it is at present so delightful an uncertainty that I every moment fear the real person will appear and wrest the illusion from me. You tell me my father has been in the army, a circumstance I never heard before, this seems to give it an air of more probability.

The letter wrote to Mr. Grandison says, if you should meet with a person so like the miniature as to give you reason to think it was designed for her, and fortune has put it in your power to be of service, examine the device, it will lead you to the name; but if that accursed selfish disposition reigns in you that has in your father, (which God forbid) let it remain, nor seek to know from idle curiosity only, one of the worthiest and most wronged of her sex.

We are all to meet to day to lay our wise heads together, to see if we shall find the clue to get us out of this labyrinth—I wish yet dread the event.

I will now, as you desired, give you an account of the reception of the bride and bridegroom.

They

They were met by all our rural neighbours, about a mile from the Lodge, the cow, adorned with ribbons, brought up the rear; the women with the children and the men divided to let them pass through—Long live our noble benefactors, was echoed by them all. They got out of their chariot, and even Lady Gertrude, who accompanied them, would walk through the row of villagers. Harriet, with that sweetness peculiar to herself, thanked them for their attention, said, she was glad it had been in her power to contribute to their happiness, that they might depend upon her friendship in future—Augustus said something similar, and invited the whole to Belleville Lodge to supper; the housekeeper had orders before to get every thing ready for so large a family, Fanny and myself with Mr. and Mrs. Smith to receive them.

The next day the bells began ringing and bonfires blazed from every village, all was joy and festivity.

I will not close this letter 'till I can give you the result of our consultation. Lady Harriet is just come in, desires her best love, but insists upon my not writing a word more, Fanny is quite of her side, and threatens to snatch the pen from me. Adieu for the present.

I will

I will now, my dear Madam, tell you the whole of yesterday's transactions.

Harriet sent her woman to freize our hair, with a note, insisting on our being full dressed in honour to Augustus, for she knew this would be the day that his name would be ascertained, therefore was resolved to keep it as when a christian name was given; besides, she expected visitors and dressed we must be—and dressed we were I assure you.

Mrs. Smith in a brown tabby, so thick she could scarce put a pin in—I had my mother's diamonds on; when I opened the casket I thought of my father's last words, and in spite of every effort the tears dropped from my eyes: It was some time before I could recover spirits sufficient to join my party—What could be the meaning of his desiring me not to part with this casket? (I exclaimed) for I have examined it over and cannot find a place where any thing could be secreted.

Our friend's coach came with Augustus in it to escort us, every former sorrow was obliterated, and each strove to testify their satisfaction—friendship and good humour reigned.

After dinner a chariot drove to the gate, and, to my great surprise, who should I see but the Duke and Lord Henry—

Henry—I trembled to such a degree at the sight of the former, that had not every one been in a bustle I must have been noticed; however, Harriet and Augustus kept up such a sprightly conversation that all constraint vanished, and in a short time I felt myself quite at ease—I caught his Grace every moment looking at me.

Harriet now told him on what account we were met, in order to give her husband a name, begged his Grace would be sponsor.

You deal in enigmas, Harriet, (returned the Duke) I really am at a loss where to find you.

Then, Sir, be it known to you, that I, Harriet Bently, alias Grandison, alias Armstrong, being desirous of obliterating all those alias's (thief taking appellations) and, as solicitous of knowing my real name, have convened this good company to find how I am to be stiled in future; for my own part, I have not the least doubt but upon scrutinizing matters, Augustus and Maria will be declared brother and sister, of course my name will be Armstrong—but there is nothing like investigation to satisfy the world.

Your reason for such an assertion.

Tell me, my Lord Duke, whom is this like? shewing her bracelet.

Lady

Lady Maria certainly, (answered his Grace) but what has this picture to do with the discovery you talk of?

In the first place, Sir, this is the very identical miniature left my good man by his father, read the words underneath—Behold your sister.

If that is the only convincing proof, though I confess it a great likeness, yet I know several instances of people being so much alike as to occasion law suits; he then told two or three instances that corresponded, with this assertion; my heart felt immediately depressed.

Every hope was on the wing, when Augustus repeated the words that were on his father's letter; now let us try to find out the device, for, I thank God, I have the means as well as the heart if ever I am so fortunate to find a sister, to enable her to appear as such; my estate of Kingston, adjoining to this is already settled upon her, and ten thousand pounds on the day of taking possession of it, to all which my Harriet has consented.

Indeed I have, (she replied) and shall be happy to see it disposed of this afternoon, and trebly so if Maria is found to be the person.

His Grace took it—the device I see is an arm drawing an immense large bow.

What

What a bow! (says Frances, as she gave it) it must be an arm as strong as Hercules to draw it.

Lord Henry started, what can be more plain, reverse it, call it Armstrong.

'Tis evident, echoed Mr Smith.

There cannot be a doubt, Augustus, said I.

I am absolutely convinced, cried Harriet.

I desired they would examine still farther before they pronounced it absolute—there must be some meaning in this little figure, opening the casket.

Send instantly for your's, my dear Maria, (said Fanny) remember your father's injunctions, never to part with it.

It was ordered to be brought immediately, the little figure was again examined, and particularly the part he had his finger on, though I had so narrowly looked it over in the morning; yet, judge my surprise, led by the guide in the miniature, we discovered a separation which by sliding out dropped the picture of Augustus! though some years younger yet the likeness was great, but to put it beyond a doubt was wrote on the other side—Maria, behold your brother, now Earl of——, and God grant that the knowledge of your being so nearly related may be fortunate to you.

Yes,

Yes, my dear father, it shall, it shall, for I will do every thing in my power to render her future life happy : He then ran to me with open arms—my dear sister and my dear brother was all we could articulate ; the whole company was affected, the Duke absolutely shed tears, Harriet and Fanny sobbed aloud, Lord Henry stood like a statue, nor had the power to move.

After some time they all wished us joy, his Grace took me cordially by the hand, and said, my kindred to his dear Augustus had sunk into oblivion every reluctance that he had felt before to acknowledge in the daughter of the Earl of——, the many perfections he saw me mistress of, he assured me, he now was happy to find my situation in life would be enviable, and if I would forgive an old man's prejudice, for my sake he would conquer those unjust principles in future, and live in charity with all mankind.

Amen, (said Harriet) and women too, I hope—thus then I join you together, not as man and wife, good your Grace, but as sincere friends.

My Lord Duke, believe me, next to the fortunate circumstances that have just happened, nothing could afford me more real satisfaction, than to be thought
well

well of by your Grace; I accept the offer of your friendship with unfeigned pleasure.

Lord Henry said this present moment was the happiest he had ever experienced.

Well, (said Frances) now we have expressed all our feelings, let us talk no more to-day on the subject, for I really cannot bear to go farther; my sensibility is wound up to the highest pitch, one more effort and the strings will break.

Poor Fanny, (replied Augustus) sooner than that should happen to my little favorite, we will wave the conversation this moment, and repair to the music room, and treat the Duke, our good rector and his lady with a concert, only first tell me, (says this astonished pair) what we are to call you, my dear Miss Aubreys, in future.

Indeed, (answered Frances) my good friends, it is only one of us is an impostor, I am still Frances Aubrey, Maria has her Ladyship tacked to the name of Armstrong.

It is even so, (I replied) From the expectation of a very genteel fortune to the certainty of its being reduced to a small one, made me wish to drop my title, that I might conform in every shape to my situation, I then took Fanny's name and dubbed myself her

H

sister,

sister, and with you we intended to reside unknowing and unknown; for tho' you, my dear Mrs. Smith, have been so long from the world, you had no occasion to be informed that without money you are mere nothings on the theatre of life; act your part ever so well, you only fill up a void in the creation. If you give an opinion, your voice is not heard, who will listen to such low people? If you differ in sentiment, it is the height of insolence: In short, you are in a manner banished society; therefore, rather than have that mortification, I voluntarily banished myself, and here, owing to your goodness, I have found that happiness I never experienced before, I now exchange pity for their contempt, and view their narrowness of heart with concern.

The rector shook hands, told me, he applauded my way of thinking, riches were only to be valued as they are used; for his part, it was so much his own, that he thought me full as agreeable when plain Miss Aubrey, as now when possessed of title and fortune.

We adjourned to the music room, Lady Harriet whispered, be sure sing some of the airs in *Love in a Village*, for they are favorites of my uncle's.

After we had played several pieces of music, his Grace desired a song, he looked

ed at me—I bowed, and sung, ‘It is not wealth, it is not birth, &c.’ He expressed his satisfaction and paid me a hundred compliments on my voice.—Fanny sung her droll songs with great humour, and pleased the whole company, we were so happy together that we did not part ‘till late.

Come, my dear Mrs. Grenville, come amongst us, and share our felicity. I shall insist upon your spending most part of your time with me when I am settled in my house, it will add greatly to my happiness to have you a partaker. Adieu, believe me most affectionately,

Your’s,

MARIA ARMSTRONG.

LETTER XXXI.

Lord Henry to George Ashley, Esq.

DEAR GEORGE,

COLONEL BOWEN is arrived and taken possession of Beauchamp’s house, he called on me yesterday, and I
H 2 introduced

introduced him to our little party, the Duke recollected him, and I was happy to meet my old friend, he is to dine with us to-day. I have looked him out for Fanny Aubrey, but she declares against matrimony, says she can never be so happy as with her two friends, and from them the syren man shall never tempt her.

We will try what can be done, (I returned) notwithstanding your protestations, you must be more than woman, Frances, to withstand a smart handsome young man, with a scarlet coat and cockade,

Conspicuous badge, which only heroes wear,
Ensign of war and favorite of the fair.

But here he comes, to conquer or not is the question—the door opening put a stop to our discourse.

It was as I thought—he came and saw, she overcame, he is downright in love, nor am I surprised at it; for tho' she is not what may be called strictly handsome, yet there is something so benign, so truly feminine in her countenance, that she is universally admired. Her fortune is a mere trifle, only one hundred pounds a year, her friends wish to enlarge it, but she will not suffer it. Maria insists on adding one thousand pounds,
and

and Harriet has again and again offered her the same; she says, she will promise to accept from them her board, but more she will not, and were it not for their poor subjects, she should not know how to dispose of what she now has.

Augustus begs her not to part with her heart 'till Harcourt comes, who he is in daily expectation of; he hopes she will pity and strive to dissipate the sorrow that depresses him, for, he says, he has promised him great things from her lively manner, which if she engages herself it will be over, love will banish pity, and his poor friend instead of being bettered may have another passion to combat with. She has given her word she will not be taken in easily, besides, she says, having two strings to her bow she has then a choice.

Augustus has acted nobly by his sister, he has given her a very good estate, there is a comfortable house belonging to it, and ten thousand pounds to begin housekeeping; she is very busy furnishing it, and in two months or less it will be fit for her reception.

She has promised me as soon as I can get my father's consent she will be mine, yet has hitherto kept me from asking it, 'till she is assured she has entirely won his esteem—she may be certain of it, for every

every action bespeaks his partiality. I have told her positively this morning I will no longer delay it, she used many arguments to persuade me to wait a week or two, but I got Harriet and Fanny to join with me, and with some hesitation she was at last brought to consent, though I am almost assured I shall not meet a refusal, yet my spirits are cruelly agitated, should I be deceived, George, you must go and bespeak a place for me in Bethlehem; if my father says no, I shall absolutely run distracted. I should tire you were I to describe my feelings at this present moment—I had a hundred things to tell you; but this subject, like Aaron's rod, has swallowed up every other, in pity therefore to you I will say no more, but hasten to subscribe myself

Your affectionate friend

HENRY BENTLY.

LETTER

LETTER XXXII.

Lady Harriet to Mrs. Grenville:

HERE I am, my dear Mrs. Grenville, in all but friendship totally metamorphosed, the gay, the giddy, the runabout Harriet, sedate and full as domesticated as an old tabby cat, if I live half a century longer you will see my good man and me each by the fire-side smoaking our pipes like Darby and Joan.

By this description do not think I am gloomy, no, I assure you I am not, I never was more lively; the sylvan deities have waved over me I believe their magic wand, and bid happiness and a rural life be one and the same thing; every word my Maria said in praise of retirement, (though by me once looked on as a tale fabricated to make me easy on her account) I now find strictly true, and not in the least exaggerated.

I have seen all our contented subjects, as I call the villagers, and received the numerous thanks of the little fraternity
for

for the addition I made to their living : I assure you we are three queens amongst them, idolized and respected as such.

I carried my uncle to see them, I thought I should have died with laughing to hear them when they saw us coming——Ralph, Sue, Margery, here, here is our good lady and the great gentleman, with his star shining by his side, with the Lord and our great 'squire Lord, all coming this way ; they were in such a hurry at those words running to the doors, not observing one or two friendly little pigs that were grunting at their thresholds, that Ralph tumbled over Sue, and Sue over Margery, and by the time we came up to them they were all prostrate at our feet neck and heels : they scrambled up as well as they could, made a hundred apologies in their awkward way, with as many scrapes, bows, and courtesies, that quite compleated the comedy.

One of them, after they had recovered from their confusion, thanked us in the name of the whole, for our condescension, said, they had now comfortable houses to ask the honours of us to walk in, described the situation they were in before the good Miss Aubreys came, and lastly, my act of generosity in the cow way—they had only barley bread before,
and

and that not half enough for their subsistence. O had your honours but seen the countenances of the poor half starved children at that time, you would think with us, we never can be thankful enough to heaven and you, we pray every night for you, and make our children do the same, even our little Jan, that can but just speak, prays as well as the rest.

Come here, little Jan, (said Augustus) let us hear your prayers.

My dear, (cried his mother) our great Lord 'squire speaks, our good Lady's husband, you must do directly whatever he bids you.

The boy immediately knelt down, lifted up his little hands, God bless our three good ladies, for making us comfortable, prosper them here, make them queens after in heaven.

The Duke had tears in his eyes, I felt mine on my cheek, our two beaux would have caught the infection, but the little one, as soon as he had done with his prayers, got up and danced a jig, in his way, by way of entertaining us, that we could not help laughing at the sudden transition of the boy. The Duke left five guineas amongst them, Henry and Augustus the same; but never did you see such transported creatures as they

H 5

were

were when they saw the gold—some prayed, some laughed, others jumped about in ecstasies—we left them in the midst of their tumultuous rapture unseen, so much were they absorbed in happiness.

As soon as we returned to the Lodge the bells began ringing, and the whole village appeared on fire; our males all confessed they had never experienced more heart felt pleasure. Old Sarah came to tell us they had brought their riches to her to keep, or lay out for them as she thought proper, as she is their steward; she says they have already lengthened their prayers on this account. Apropos—Augustus has sent to the West Indies for his old nurse, he longs to repay her for all her kindness to him. Mr. and Mrs. Smith, Maria and Frances desire to be remembered. Believe me ever your's,

HARRIET ARMSTRONG.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIII.

Lady Maria to Mrs. Grenville:

I FIND Lady Harriet has been tatling, has told you all the news, all our transactions at Belleville Lodge, but I am resolved to be before hand now, I will be the first to present my dear Mrs. Grenville with the sequel of our little Fanny's history, as I know you interest yourself very kindly about her, and that it will give you pleasure to hear of her happiness.

Colonel Bowen, notwithstanding her little fortune, has made her the most liberal offers, which she thought fit to refuse in as polite a manner as the matter would admit of; he declares he will not give her up, but try what time and his assiduities will do—he has promised to buy Beauchamp's estate, which he is inclined to dispose of, and to live as long in the country as we shall, nay for ever if she chuses to do so. She is at present deaf to every entreaty, the
Duke

Duke advises, Henry desires, pleads his unexceptionable character; Harriet reasons with her, points out his manly figure, his politeness, his address; Augustus will not speak, for he has another in view for her; I wish for her company, that I had rather she remained inflexible, but then I reflect how selfish this is, and therefore remain neuter.

One day we were talking of wills, Bowen said he had read a very odd one when he was in Ireland, of a Bishop, it began thus.

Whereas God has thought fit to punish me, for banishing my son, with the death of my other children, to do him justice before I die, I here declare, it was from no fault of his, but entirely from an unfortunate resemblance he bore to his mother's family, which I had great reason to hate from numberless provocations; I have enquired and find he is dead, and his son also, that he left a daughter, but what is become of her I know not, however if she is found I make her sole heiress to all my possessions, that my money shall be put into the English funds, and there accumulate till she is heard of. There were more particulars, that he could not recollect.

What was the name of the Bishop, she asked.

I think,

I think, madam, he was a name fake of your's.

Joy then, my dear Fanny, (exclaimed Lady Harriet and me together) you are the lost sheep, the identical person, we know your father's history, therefore have not a doubt.

It is right we should make some enquiries (returned his Grace) the Lord Lieutenant is my particular friend, I will immediately write and get a copy of the will, and whatever is necessary to be done on the occasion I will take on myself to see executed.

She thanked the Duke for his kindness, and the Colonel for his information. Would to God (she added) my dear brother was living to partake of this good fortune, I should then be completely happy: she then, by our desire, repeated all she knew of her parents, and her brother's shipwreck, and by relating it convinced the whole company she was the person meant.

Her lover now began to sigh, and when she left the room he was sorry he had mentioned it, for that now all his hopes were fled, for as she refused him when she had but a small fortune, it would be so much enlarged now, he could not have the courage to persevere.

Lord

Lord Henry said, to a generous mind like her's it would be, he thought, the means of forwarding his suit, she had both generosity and pride in her composition, the latter kept her from suffering herself to be so much obliged, but now they were more upon an equality, he might be assured it would take another turn.

God grant it may, replied he, with such a solemn face, that I could not help a violent fit of laughing. Now they are all going to work again with entreaties, arguments, and persuasions, what the event of all this will be I know not, as soon as this grand affair is decided, I will let you hear, 'till then and ever sincerely

Your's,

MARIA ARMSTRONG.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIV.

Lord Henry to George Ashley, Esq.

HOW things are altered, my dear George, in a few weeks—would you believe it, Lady Maria has become such a favorite with my father that my only fear now is of his becoming my rival, he is ever finding new perfections in her—

Musick has charms to sooth the savage breast.

You know how passionately fond he is of vocal and instrumental, Maria is so great a proficient in both, and ever ready and willing to entertain him, that she has absolutely won his heart—Fanny is also a great favorite, she rides, walks, and plays backgammon with him—Harriet is consulting his taste about her garden—old Mrs. Smith and aunt Gertrude come in also for their share of his company, that I declare betwixt the females, I have very little of it, they engross the whole; indeed we are at present the happiest family in the world: the

two old ladies are inseparables, and where you see one of the young ones you meet the trio.

My father has just sent for me to his closet, perhaps to sound my inclinations, I go with fear and trembling: this love makes a coward of us all; as soon as I return I will give you our conversation.

Oh, George, what I hinted to you in joke is now become a reality, I have ordered my horse, and whilst they are getting him ready will try to tell you the cause.

When I came I found his Grace in a pensive posture, leaning his head on his hand. Come hither, Henry, I have been long debating with myself, (he said) whether I should yet acquaint you with my determination, but my affection for you has conquered; you are well acquainted with Lady Maria Armstrong's perfections?

Indeed I am, Sir, and think there is not such another woman in the world.

I am glad (he returned) to find your sentiments so far coincide with mine, then you will cease to wonder when I declare I am determined to make her an offer.

You joke, my Lord?

Indeed I do not, I never was more in earnest in my life.

Then

Then I am truly miserable, and from this moment I will take my leave of you, happiness, and England for ever.

Inconsistent hasty young man, I should have thought, with the sentiments you before expressed, you would have been glad your father had made so judicious a choice, however know, Sir, I am absolutely resolved, nor shall your being against it influence me in the least, I have already sent to this charming woman to beg a private audience, and (taking out his watch) she now waits. I hope the next time we meet I shall find you more favorable to my wishes. I bowed and quitted the room without saying another word, indeed vexation and surprise had deprived me of articulation.

Though I am sure Maria will refuse him, yet now I shall never get him to accede to my wishes; or if such a preposterous match should tempt me to propose breaking it, she would never consent. I am certain, therefore I am ruined, I am undone—How are all my pleasing hopes vanished! I shall only stay here whilst I write a letter to my dear Maria and my other friends, and then farewell for ever—I cannot take my leave of any one, my mind is a perfect chaos—I shall tell the servants I am going
only

only a few miles, do meet me at Dover if you can.

Your's,

HENRY BENTLY.

LETTER XXXV.

Lord Henry to George Ashley, Esq.

DEAR GEORGE,

I MOUNTED my horse, as I told you in my last, and was riding thro' a narrow lane that leads to the turnpike road so absorbed in thought, that I did not observe 'till I was about the middle, a lady leaning on a gentleman's arm, coming towards me. I had no alternative, for a waggon was close behind me, which had entirely filled up the road—when, as they drew near, to my great surprise I plainly discovered the Duke and Maria; the

the seeing them so familiar immediately informed me my father must have been successful, which so agitated my spirits, and had such an effect on my mind, that by the time they came up to me I was deprived of my senses, and sunk lifeless on the horse, he caught me in his arms, nor did I recover until I was carried home and laid on a bed.

When I opened my eyes the first object that presented itself was Lady Maria in tears; when my father saw me move he exclaimed, God be thanked, my son is restored to me; Henry, can you listen, if not, I will defer what I wish to say 'till you are quite recovered.

I bowed—he proceeded.

The lovely Maria is your's, I made use of that little artifice to punish you for not making me a confidant, for I plainly saw where your affections were engaged, and indeed thought so before I came to this part of the world, for I had many proofs of it, but I chose to be ignorant, and made an excuse to accompany you that I might be certain.

When I found her every thing I could wish, and so nearly related to my nephew, I felt an happiness indescribable, and wished every day to hear from you a declaration of your love—at last I grew impatient, and founded Maria, she
very

very candidly confessed her partiality, and what had passed betwixt you, and that she had promised to marry no one but yourself, but knowing your word had been given me, she had told you, that until I could be brought to think well of her, and should approve your marrying her she would never be your's; the knowing this raised her still higher in my estimation, and she gave way to my solicitation to carry on this little deceit, we knew your plan of going off, and had ordered it so to meet you where you could not escape us, little thinking it would have terminated in the manner it did.

O, Sir, (said I) you are all goodness, the knowledge of my happiness has contributed more to my restoration than all the medicines in the world, I feel myself already quite recovered.

My dear Maria, for now I can truly call you mine, from henceforward the study of my life shall be to render your's happy, and to testify my gratitude to the best of parents.

I beg, Lord Henry, you will be silent on this topic for the present, (she said) and let me have the felicity of introducing you once more to your friends, who are all anxious about you. I immediately gave her my hand, and we
joined

joined the family, who all congratulated me on my recovery and the means that were so instrumental in hastening it.

Joy, love, and friendship once more reigns throughout. I send this express for fear you should begin your journey to Dover, instead of which, I beg you will come on here, for, believe me, nothing will add more to the satisfaction of your sincere friend than the meeting you here.

Your's ever,

HENRY BENTLY.

LETTER XXXVI.

Lady Harriet to Mrs. Grenville.

MY DEAR MRS. GRENVILLE,

MARIA conquers all hearts, the Duke is every day more and more attached to her, and Henry the fondest, truest lover
of

of his time, counting the hours he shall call her his. I suppose she has wrote you their marriage is fixed for this day week, so concludes the adventures of Lady-Maria and Lord Henry.

All novels, you know, after a variety of occurrences end in matrimony, so fared it with me, and so will it with her, the last of the friendly trio is now to be brought forth—Frances will make no small figure in history, I assure you; but before I begin with her I will finish Maria's.

You know she is not married yet, so that I have liberty to talk of her a little longer.

The Duke is so pleased with his son's choice and the country also, that he declared this morning whenever he left us it would be with the greatest regret.

Maria said, it gave her an inexpressible pleasure to hear he was so fond of the country, as she could now with more assurance ask of him two favors.

He desired her to say what they were, any wish of her's would be a law to him—she had only to dictate, he to obey.

She thanked him for his politeness, said, when she had the honour of being allied to him he would suffer her to reside as much as possible in the country—and the other, she petitioned she might

might always have the happiness of having him under her roof.

His Grace was in raptures at this request, he rose and embraced her, told her it was what he always wished, never to be separated from his children, and that had made him more particular in his choice of a wife for his son, that he had resolved never to mention it himself, but leave it to them to propose it; since she had been so obliging he readily accepted her offer, as he did not doubt but it was their joint wish he should — But he had a favor to ask in turn, that he might be permitted to make her house uniform, by adding a wing with offices, stables, &c. to be appropriated entirely to himself, he would there live, and keep his own servants, be with them or not as he found them and himself inclined; he was now of an age when company was not always agreeable, when they were alone he should be mostly with them, and it would be to him a sufficient satisfaction to know he was so near his children.

As your Grace pleases, they both returned, make yourself happy, we shall be so to be assured you are.

Well then, (said I) suppose we went to view the place, I love to lay plans to my heart? They all agreed to this proposal,

propofal, and away we went to reconnoitre the ground.

The houfe, with this addition, will be quite a fuperb building; the workmen are to be fent for directly, they are all to refide at Belleville Lodge 'till we go to town, where we are to ftay until the houfe is finifhed and fit for their reception, when the fame party is to return again, for we have agreed never to feparate.

Lady Gertrude wifhes never to leave the country, fhe is grown fo very partial to it, and to her good neighbours, the rector and his wife; fhe has promifed to fee that all our fubjects go on well in our abfence. We have ordered another milch cow and a new fupply of flour and rice, that there may be no ftarving, no complaining in our ftreets.

I thought to have told you a little more of Frances, but this letter already is of an enormous fize, and they will not fuffer me to dedicate a moment longer to my pen, therefore I muft bid you adieu for the prefent—Maria or I will write every particular foon, in the mean time believe me with the greateft efteem and friendship,

Your's,

HARRIET ARMSTRONG.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVII.

Lady Harriet to Mrs. Grenville.

YOU see, my dear Mrs. Grenville, that I am as good as my word in writing you, the first opportunity, of our proceedings, prepare your patience for a very long account.

When we returned from our walk we found Mr. Harcourt arrived, Augustus was happy to meet his friend, and as soon as Maria and Frances entered he introduced them as the two sister villagers, he had so often heard him speak of. He seemed quite struck with their appearance, and I heard him whisper Augustus, he found the ladies far beyond every thing he had described, or he could have expected to see, for he had never told him their history, therefore concluded by his calling whenever he mentioned them the rural nymphs the charming cottagers, that they were born and had ever lived in the country;

no wonder then such elegant accomplished women as they both are should create astonishment.

I plainly perceive Bowen will have a rival, for our new acquaintance could not keep his eyes from Frances, nor indeed she from him—the colonel saw it and was not a little chagrined, jealousy was strongly depicted in his countenance, and I thought I could read duels, blood, and murder, wrote in his eyes.

I was very glad when dinner was announced, that their thoughts might be turned another way—he took his seat by her, as usual, soldier like, I found he was resolved not to give her up.

Mr. Harcourt drank to Lady Maria and Lady Frances, the latter smiled, I am much obliged to you, Sir, but indeed I am no titled person, when you do me the honour of noticing me again, leave out your Ladyship.

I beg your pardon, Madam, (said Harcourt) but I always understood you were sisters.

We are so, Sir, in affection, but not by consanguinity.

By what name then am I to address you, my dear Madam?

Frances Aubrey.

Frances

Frances Aubrey! (he exclaimed) That name harrows up my very soul. He sighed, put his knife and fork across, It is probable, it is possible.

I am sorry, Sir, (said she) I should mention a name that apparently causes you so much uneasiness.

My emotion arose (he returned) from your great likeness to a family, the dearest I had once on the earth, had you ever a brother?

Yes, Sir, (she replied) I had indeed, and to whose memory I have shed thousands of tears, he was shipwrecked going to the East Indies, when he was not quite fourteen.

He was so, but his life was saved.

O Sir, tell me, (cried she eagerly) tell me what became of him.

He was taken up by a Spanish vessel, and there made a prisoner, I saw him in his confinement.

And there he died, (said she hastily) and immediately fainted.

He flew to her, caught her in his arm—Bowen tried to put him aside, but he soon gave way when he heard him say, I have killed my sister.

We begged him not to say who he was, for fear her spirits would not encounter a second shock, 'till we by degrees made her acquainted with it.

As soon as she recovered she desired air, Maria led her into the garden.—— Whilst she was absent we desired an explanation, but we found him as incapable of speaking as his sister, so alarmed was he on her account.

When she came in she made an apology for disturbing the company, but said, the hearing of her beloved brother whom she had supposed dead for so many years had escaped, his being a prisoner, his sufferings then rushed to her mind with all its horrors, his death followed, and she sunk with thought, it was insupportable—Yet, Mr. Harcourt, if it is not too much trouble, I could wish you to tell me all.

I am truly sorry, my dear Miss Aubrey, I had not at once said he was free and in perfect health.

She looked at him very earnestly some time without speaking, at last she said, if you, Sir, had been called Aubrey, my heart tells me in you I should find a brother; your resemblance to my father struck me as soon as you entered, nor have I been able to banish the idea of my dear Charles ever since I saw you. He looked at me as if afraid to speak, his silence proclaimed him her brother, and she said with great earnestness, keep me not in suspense, but make me happy
by

by telling me you are him ; my spirits will bear joy when they cannot sorrow.

I can no longer, my dear Fanny, conceal my felicity, I am your brother.

I should have said, never was joy equal to theirs, if we had not experienced a similar scene so lately.

After it was a little subsided and we had congratulated them on their happy meeting, he bowed very gracefully to all around him, said, that we might be assured he was no impostor, if we would be so polite to give him a hearing he would recite every occurrence that had happened to him from the time he left his father's house. We all expressed our approbation, and he began.

I will pass over the melancholy parting, and what my young heart felt in being divided from my parents, and from a sister I so tenderly loved—the captain's friendship for my grandfather made him regard me as a relation, his kindness soon reconciled me to my fate and to the life of a sailor.

We had been at sea five months with very tolerable weather, when one night the wind arose most tempestuously, thunder and lightning followed with such a thick fog we could not see where about we were, our distress was great, indeed I cannot now think of it without shuddering,

ing, for the vessel in spite of every effort after being long the sport of winds and waves, dashed against a rock. I remember I clung round the captain, he ordered the boats to be immediately thrown over, took me by the hand, said, Charles, this is our last stake, and instantly jumped with me into the largest, many followed and as many were drowned in attempting it—after infinite struggles and dangers we got between the rocks and clambered to a place of safety: What added to our distress, it was uninhabited, a few biscuits were all we had saved.

The winds now abated, the sky became clear and serene, and the cheerful sun gave us a momentary pleasure, 'till recollection came with all its horrors, and told us we had no provisions left.

We sat looking at each other in an agony of grief, when one of the sailors with an oath, started up and said, he would not lie there and die like a dog, remember Master Hercules, Captain, what he said to the waggoner that called upon him to help him; did he not call him a lazy scoundrel, and said he should first strive himself, and be d—d to him, and I wish I may never see Kate again if I do not think he was in the right of it, I'll get to the top-most rock whilst I have strength, when I am starved it will
be

be too late, whilst some of you go where we foundered and see whether you can find some of our meat barrels or any thing in the eating or drinking way.

They now jumped up all hands, a ray of hope darted, and this speech revived the before lifeless crew.

He had not been long on the rock when he saw a sail at a distance, he hal-
lowed to us to bring up something to make a signal; we instantly collected our handkerchiefs from our necks and pockets and gave him, which had the desired effect—the people on board saw it, and sent off their boat. The others had been as successful in finding some of the ship's stores, which had floated amongst the rocks, we had all partook of it by the time the boat arrived, they took us all in, but as soon as I came on board we were told, when we declared ourselves Englishmen, that their nation and ours were at war, and we were now prisoners.

This damped their spirits, for life on those terms appeared to many of them worse than death—for my part, I own it was not so with me, I was young, and had never thought of the miseries of a prison, therefore was thankful for my deliverance.

We were sent ashore on one of the Spanish settlements, and there confined,
the

the Captain was ransomed, but not 'till he had experienced the hardships of confinement three years; he promised to let my friends know my situation on his arrival, but unfortunately I found on enquiring after him since I came to England he died on his passage.

The fourth year of my captivity as I was looking through the prison bars a gentleman passed, stared me full in the face, returned again, he then spoke to me in English, asked my name, and how long I had been confined. I saw he was much affected at my sorrowful tale, when he left me he said, I should hear from him soon.

Hope seemed now to irradiate my prison, and my heart whispered I should find a friend. When liberty has once got possession of the mind every hour drags heavily 'till we are enlarged, I had even chalked down the passing moments.

When I saw him enter with that benign countenance that at the first sight endeared him to me, Charles, (said he) you see I have not forgot you; if you are willing to change masters your ransom is paid.

I kneeled, I kissed his hand an hundred times, indeed my happiness was so great I had no expression. I took leave of my fellow sufferers with tears, and followed my benefactor to his lodgings.

He

He now told me, that my likeness to an only son he had lost struck him as he passed, and he could not resist the propensity he found in himself to converse with and make me free.

He then asked me particulars of my family, when he found I was not meanly descended, and had had a good education, he proceeded to inform me of his situation and circumstances; I found his fortune noble, and that he had no heir, nor scarcely a distant relation.

He said he was going to the East where he was settled, and if I would accompany him he would adopt me as his child, on my taking the name of Harcourt, he promised to let my friends know it, and did not doubt but if I consented they would also: I thanked him in terms that pleased him, and he immediately clothed me as his son, and gave me twenty guineas which I distributed among my fellow prisoners.

We soon arrived at Bengal, every person that came to welcome him was struck with my resemblance to his son, which gave him great pleasure and made him still the fonder of me, and for the three years I lived with him no one but would have thought me the person I had the good luck to resemble, by his kind treatment of me. He made a will

and left me every thing he possessed; it was fortunate for me he had settled his affairs, for shortly after he expired suddenly—I felt his loss as much as if he had been my real father.

Bengal was now become irksome, and in losing Mr. Harcourt I had lost every thing, and my wishes to see my relations in England made me resolve to arrange my affairs, that I might sail in one of the next ships.

I accordingly did and arrived safe without any thing material happening, but my being known to Mr. Grandison—he has often been witness of my anxieties, my fears how I should find my family after so long an absence, never hearing the least account of you though I had wrote so often—I have since thought Mr. Harcourt suppressed my letters that he might not lose me.

I immediately repaired to our village, but how was I distressed to find every friend dead except my sister, and all the account I could hear of her, she was gone to live with some lady, but who or where no one could tell me.

My unhappiness at finding myself deprived of every relation caused that melancholy that Lady Harriet has so often joked me about; you will now find me a very different being I assure you,

you, ladies, my heart is at ease, and my spirits, which are naturally good, will return with fresh vigour, that instead of being checked for gloominess, I fear you will be forced to chide me for volatility.

And now, my dearest sister, I have the satisfaction to tell you I have a fortune sufficient to make us both happy, I will live where you please, do as you please, but let us never more be parted.

She smiled through her tears, (which had flowed very plentifully at some parts of the recital) told him, he should first hear what had befallen her before they made any division.

She then repeated every circumstance, and he was not a little surprised his sister would have a fortune equal to his own; he thanked us for our kindness to her, and the Colonel for his being the instrument of her being so well provided for.

After our congratulations were over Augustus whispered him that Mr. Bowen was a lover of Frances, he approved of him much, and after some little time she declared herself no enemy to him—they are already brothers in affection, he is to live with them, and they are going to build a house nearer us than Beauchamp's, and in one of the pleasantest spots in England.

The

The copy of her grandfather's will has been received, and the original money is forty thousand pounds, she has put in her claim which has been acknowledged, and every thing settled.

Augustus's old nurse is come, the poor creature was quite in an ecstasy when she saw him, she found by the letters his father was dead, and addressed him as Earl of ———, a very handsome annuity is now settled on her, and an offer has been made her either to live with us, or to have a small house built, she has taken the first—Francis has done the same by Sarah. The Duke has provided handsomely for our good rector, whose company he is now so fond of that they are seldom apart—Lady Gertrude has a similar friendship for Mrs. Smith, and we are all closely connected in the same bond.

My Augustus has parted his estates into farms of about a hundred a year each, and placed the most deserving of our villagers in them, their sons and daughters we have apprenticed to different trades, when they have served their proper time they are to return to their native home, so that we shall have every thing that is useful within ourselves.

Lord Henry, the Colonel, and Mr. Harcourt, who have now purchased Beauchamp's

Beauchamp's estate, intend following so laudable an example, every village will by this means flourish, and our very fields will laugh and sing.

And now, my dear Mrs. Grenville, all I ask for this long letter is the pleasure of your company, to see the happy knots tied. Maria tells me she shall write by this post to desire it, Frances will add a line to the same purpose, our beaux beg it, you cannot sure refuse us all, therefore as soon as you receive this we shall expect you to begin your journey. 'Till I have the felicity of seeing you and ever believe me with unfeigned regard and esteem,

Your's,

HARRIET ARMSTRONG.

We have been visited by all the neighbouring families.

END OF VOL. I.